

SDG 16+ Report Format

(peaceful, justice and inclusive societies)

Chapter 1

1. What is Goal 16 Plus in your national context (maximum 500 words)

(This will seek to explain the relevance of Goal 16 + as the core of the 2030 Agenda’s Peaceful, Just and Inclusive pillar, SDG 16+ as a catalyst to fully realize the 2030 Agenda, as an integrated and mutually-reinforcing whole focused on advancing government accountability, building trust, and sustaining peace, at the national level)

In 2015 the Republic of Kazakhstan, as one of the United Nations Member States, signed a document on the adoption of the 2015-2030 Development Agenda with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Currently the country is in the process of localizing the SDGs aimed at improving the quality of citizens’ life, socio-economic development and environmental sustainability. The cornerstone of the SDG 16 plus for the Republic associated with the delivery of the 2030 Agenda targets by promoting the rule of law, justice, democracy, human rights, and equality. The SDG 16 plus are also seen crucial for the country in achieving better accountability, transparency, efficiency of public institutions and, therefore, building the citizens’ trust in legitimacy in the national and local authorities.



SDG indicators 2020 Kazakhstan has ranked 65th among 166 countries with an overall index score of 71.1, the report revealed. Kazakhstan achieved sustainable development goals in terms of "no poverty" according to 2019 records.

The political will to promote the nationalization and implementation are well reflected in the national priorities adopted in the *Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy*, and the *Strategic Plan for Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025*. Precise instructions on achieving inclusive and sustainable society were provided in the *100 Concrete steps to implement five institutional reforms* by the first President of the State Nursultan Nazarbayev as of 2015, which are also known

as the *Nations' Plan*. It is a response to global and internal challenges and, at the same time, is seen instrumental to persuade entering the top 30 developed states in the world.

The *Nations' Plan* tasks to introduce fundamental transformations in society and at the state level with the main goal to "treat systemic diseases" apart from considering only external courses. The *Nation's Plan* entails five Presidential reforms on:

1. Development of a professional and autonomous state apparatus;
2. Ensuring the rule of law and openness of the judicial system;
3. Diversified industrialization and economic growth;
4. Strengthening the 'Nation of a Single Future' identity of Kazakhstan;
5. Transparency and public accountability.

Out of 100 *Concrete steps* of reforms targets # 97-99 have direct link to the SDG 16 plus. Speaking precisely, they target at the national level to:

97 - Expand the ability of citizens to participate in the decision-making process through the development of self-regulation and local self-government;

98 - Introduce an independent local government budget at the level of a rural district, aul (village), a village, a township, a city of district significance. Appropriate mechanisms will be employed to allow citizens involving into the process of inclusive budgeting;

99 - Strengthen the role of public councils under state bodies and akims (heads of local administrations). They will facilitate the discussion under the implementation of strategic plans and programs for the development of territories; budgets, reports, achievement of target indicators, draft regulatory legal acts, which affect the rights and freedoms of citizens; and draft strategic documents. The enhanced status and legitimacy of public councils at the legislative level will inevitably increase transparency of decision making.

The above reforms are closely aligned at their core to the Agenda of the SDGs and to SDG 16 plus, in particular. In spite of a political will that takes place to introduce relevant reforms in the enlisted sectors, the country - like many others - experiences challenges in proper implementation of the reforms.

According to Freedom House, political rights and civil liberties out of a possible total of 100, Kazakhstan was awarded 23 points, placing the country into the category "Not Free". In this regard the SDG 16 plus targets' implementation are instrumental for empowering leadership in human rights to promote peace, justice and inclusiveness in Kazakhstan. The country has to explore solutions to current challenges in line with the SDG16 plus indicators, which prompts to leave no one behind along this ambitious and demanding path. Needless to mention, that accurate and efficient implementation of the SDG 16 plus will inevitably contribute to fostering the localization of other SDGs.

Chapter II

Please refer to the Regional Report

Chapter III

3. Understanding SDG 16 Plus (1000 words maximum)

- **24 targets from seven other goals directly measure, using a total of 33 additional indicators, at least one aspect of peace, inclusion, or access to justice. Though not directly, SDG 16 is also inseparably linked with all other SDGs; their related targets and indicators are leveraged to enhance all facets of SDG 16+.**
- **Looking at the available data for all the national level data, share data gaps, if any data collected by the CSOs and other stakeholders - Citizens led data is available, if yes, Please highlight them**

On the way to its 30th anniversary of independence in 2021 the Republic of Kazakhstan strides towards securing the fundamental human rights, independent and partial judiciary, fair and transparent governance and economic transformation to “green” growth. The reforms promote respective legislation development in different spheres and the country’s participation in the global SDG processes, driven by the will to enter top 30 developed states in the world. Thus, in 2019 the Republic presented its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) and provided a statement on behalf of civil society during the HLPF. It’s a good sign of high-level commitments to stick to the SDG agenda. Nevertheless, the policies and legislation still have to be enforced through adequate practice at the national and grassroots level.

Thus, the current situation with the human rights implementation in Kazakhstan necessitates to urgently increase awareness, capacity of state agencies and CSOs; identify national SDG 16 plus indicators to monitor and oversight its implementation; and get acquainted with available best practices on SDG 16 plus localization and implementation for possible replication in Kazakhstan.

In view of above, out of Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies indicators, of crucial importance remain the last two ones. Below mentioned information provides a brief overview of the country’s areas, demonstrating its will and gaps in coping with the key development challenges under the SDG 16 plus towards prosperous sustainable development.

Law enforcement and judicial reforms

Reduced access to justice directly impacts the chance to be heard, regardless of who you are, where you live, or how much money you have. Justice impartiality and independence are the priority tasks of a country in the short and long-run. The authorities fully recognize that these will largely help to apply the rule of law, and enforce the results, however, the changes in the system, unfortunately, cannot be expected soon.

Individuals and organizations may seek civil remedies for human rights violations through domestic courts. Economic and administrative court judges handle civil cases under a court structure that largely mirrors the criminal court structure. Although the law and constitution provide for judicial resolution of civil disputes, observers viewed civil courts as corrupt and unreliable.

**2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Kazakhstan
US Department of State**

In Kazakhstan today, the work of law enforcement agencies is still regarded as unsatisfactory by the public. In this situation the law enforcement and judicial systems have to be further improved to secure Kazakhstan as a “Hearing State”. The court must be adversarial and the judge free from the prosecution. The inequality between the lawyer and the prosecutor should be eliminated and building public confidence in the courts is seen by the public as a priority.

According to the Human Right Watch (HRW) Submission to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Kazakhstan as of November 2019, Kazakhstan’s poor human rights record has regrettably deteriorated since its UPR in October 2014, shrinking the civic space and undermining the life being of ordinary citizens. The authorities abuse the Criminal legislation in an attempt to silence government critics. In 2016 the authorities imprisoned Maks Bokayev and Talgat Ayan, activists for five years who peacefully protested against the proposed amendments to the Land Code. Ayan was released in 2018, while Bokayev is still unfairly imprisoned on a variety of trumped-up criminal charges, including *inciting social discord*.

In October 2019, a number of independent non-profit civil society and human rights organizations were "attacked" by the tax authorities, which - in the civic activists’ belief - was masterminded by the national security authorities. The failure to provide ontime notification to authorities about the receipt of funds from foreign sources and their spending and improper filling the information forms are prosecuted by the current Code of Administrative Offenses. It provides for severe administrative penalties of a fine of more than 500,000 tenge (1,180 USD) and suspension of activities for up to 3 months (Article 460-1 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan). The CSOs that are “under pressure” suggest that the tax authorities have been “instructed” to find any inaccuracies, clerical mistakes in reporting to draw up administrative violation records.

The fight against corruption

Since 2002 the fight against corruption has become one of the main priorities in Kazakhstan. The country adopted respective legislation with the State Program to Combat Corruption for 2011-2015 and ratified major UN conventions on combating corruption and fighting trans-national organized crime; passed the law on public councils, became the member of Anti-corruption Istanbul Action Plan to facilitate better anti-corruption framework in the country. Moreover, a modern state model has been introduced to prevent corruption through an Open Government

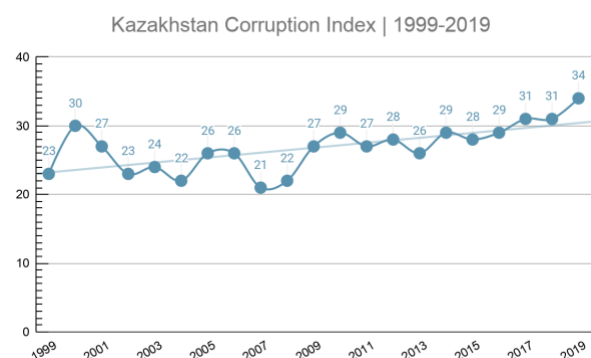
electronic platform consisting of five open data portals. A Republican Special Monitoring Group, led by CSO is currently active under the Anti-Corruption Agency of Kazakhstan with regular raids to the regions of Kazakhstan to widely involve civil society representatives in the fight against corruption and increase their public control skills to prevent and combat corruption in the remote regions.

In spite of ongoing reforms and undertaken measures, corruption still prevails in the country.

Corruption is widespread in the executive branch, law enforcement agencies, local government administrations, the education system, and the judiciary, according to human rights CSOs.

According to Transparency International, Kazakhstan scored 34 points out of 100 on the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index, by taking lead among the Central Asian countries. This place Kazakhstan shared with the Philippines, Zambia, Nepal, El Salvador and Swaziland.

Kazakhstan has accelerated business climate improvement in the World Bank's Doing Business 2020 study, which, *inter alia*, covers the performance in the area of entrepreneurial activity and, specifically, captures several important dimensions of the regulatory environment for business. According to WB Doing Business study, Kazakhstan jumped in this ranking eight positions to reach No. 28 ahead of China (#46) and India (#77) and all four Central Asian states (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).



The above provides strong evidence from the independent source on the status and progress of the fight against corruption in Kazakhstan. The situation is gradually improving, but more work is ahead.

Public access to information

In spite of the government measures to improve the public access to information the civic activists more often express concerns regarding the implementation of the fundamental human right to access to information, which inevitably leads to shrinking civic space in the country. Thus, the RSF – World Press Freedom Index 2020 assessed Kazakhstan being at the 157th spot (out of 180) in RSF's 2017 World Press Freedom index with a tiny change of 1 score in comparison to 2019.

The assessment was made, based on concrete cases on restricting the freedom of expression and independence of the median namely, with respect to Forbes Kazakhstan and Ratel.kz, an analytical news portal and interrogated journalists. They faced a criminal investigation in 2018 on “disseminating knowingly false information”. The same month, a court denied parole to Aset

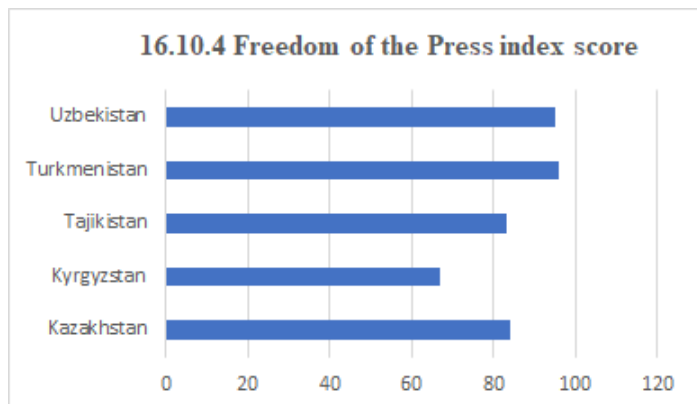
Mataev, an imprisoned journalist, despite his eligibility after serving one-third of his six-year prison sentence. The media civil activists call for urgent ceaser of any harassment and reprisals against independent and critical journalists and end arbitrary blocking of websites, including social media.

Furthermore, according to the Global Right to Information Rating (RTI), the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Access to Information" does not comply with international standards and basic principles in the field of freedom of information. The index rated the quality of the law at 61 points out of 150 possible. In the overall ranking of 123 countries Kazakhstan takes 109th place. Thus, Kazakhstan was included in the top 15 countries with the worst laws on access to information as referred in the RTI.

Today, Kazakh media is increasingly becoming just a rebroadcaster of news generated by the state sector, which does not stimulate critical thinking within the public. The news has become nothing more than obvious propaganda.”

Media activist

In advance of Kazakhstan’s third UPR, Article 19, the CSO *Adil Soz* raised concerns that the situation for freedom of expression had markedly deteriorated over the last five years. It states that the government actively used an overly restrictive legal framework to harass and discourage independent and critical voices, including the media and civil society organizations. The power to block online content has regularly been used against the online media or to completely restrict Internet access, in clear violation of international human rights law and standards.



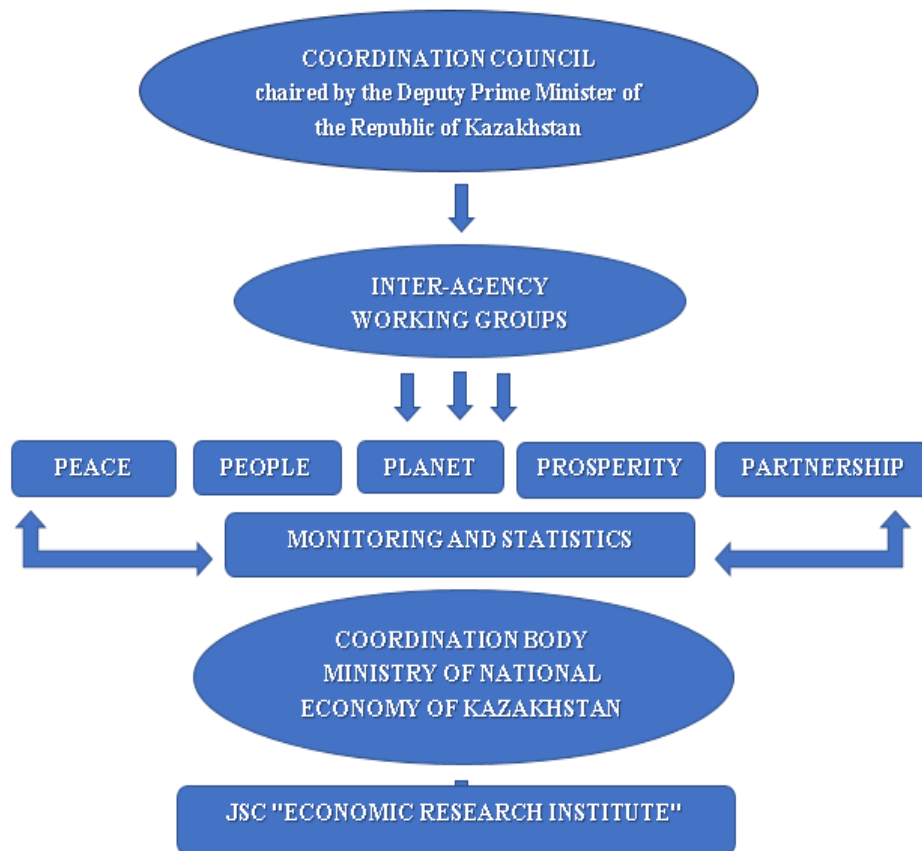
Chapter IV

4. How SDG 16 Plus encompasses Whole of Society approach or Leave no one Behind

You may analyse the role of various stakeholders in the Goal 16 Plus progress (in reference to monitoring and indicators) in last 5 years (1000 words max)

An enabling environment has to be created to accommodate various stakeholders' participation in the SDG 16 plus localization, implementation and monitoring activities. Multi-stakeholder participation in this process really matters, as it promotes a multi-stakeholder model of governance. Each of the parties plays its crucial role in the SDG 16 plus implementation and increasing the national collective ownership of implemented activities with a view of sustainable impacts.

In order to better understand the role of each and every stakeholder in this process, please, refer to the national SDGs coordination scheme at the high political level, which is designed to address the issues of the SDGs' implementation, monitoring and review at the country level.



In reference to the above, the SDG national framework is coordinated by the Prime-Minister of Kazakhstan, which by itself justifies the political will and commitment of the country to implement the 2030 Agenda priorities. Such architecture allows for smooth SDGs introduction into the national framework by taking into consideration the national peculiarities and gaps. The main tasks of the Council are:

- consideration and development of proposals for the formation of SDGs implementation single policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- coordination of the interdepartmental working groups activities in the areas of the SDGs;
- consideration and development of proposals for the SDGs implementation;
- participation in the formation of the National Voluntary Survey of Kazakhstan on the SDGs.

Five interdepartmental working groups on People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership have been established to serve this purpose. The coordination responsibilities, including monitoring and statistics functions are with the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan. Further developments under the 2030 Agenda are in progress. Each of the interdepartmental working groups has a corresponding ministry that coordinates its work. In spite of the fact that the CSOs are part of the groups, there is no transparent and open mechanism so far under the preparation of the VNR with active CSOs and other stakeholders participation.

These are major developments since 2015, undertaken mostly by the national authorities in partnership with the Parliament of Kazakhstan and international organizations. The role of parliamentarians at this stage is limited only to political support of the ongoing reforms in the SDGs' domain.

According to the international agenda the role of civil society as well as other stakeholders is vital in this process as discussed above. Currently, Kazakhstani CSOs are contributing to the SDGs implementation and, specifically, to the SDG 16 plus framework through fragmented projects without any direct reference to the national commitments under the 2030 Agenda.

Moreover, the Interagency Working Group mechanism is currently underdeveloped and needs to be further strengthened by adding real CSOs' inputs. The contributions are needed in kind of expert opinions on thematic topics, active participation in decision making at the national and local SDG platforms with a right to vote and introduce proposals for sustainable positive change. Given the bottlenecks in the human rights sector, such a holistic approach will also help contribute to better ownership of the sustainable development initiatives under the SDG 16 plus at the country level.

Chapter V

5. How SDG 16+ is instrumental in protecting fundamental freedoms in your country? -Please provide reference in respect to the available data (both qualitative and or quantitative) (1000 words max)

Kazakhstan is a unitary and secular state with a presidential form of government. The country proclaims itself a social state that holds a person, his life, rights and freedoms as the highest value. That said, there are several important political initiatives in place to support the above, such as the National Council of Public Trust under the President of Kazakhstan, the Human Dimension Dialogue Platform under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Human Rights Ombudsman Institution, the Law on Public Control that is currently in progress. Also there is a virtual reception of the President of Kazakhstan to address the citizens' needs through <https://vqb.gov.kz/site/instruction>.

The protection of rights and freedoms in Kazakhstan is safeguarded by the Constitution, which states that 'everyone is equal before the law and the court. Human rights in Kazakhstan, nevertheless, are uniformly described as poor by independent observers. Human Rights Watch says that "Kazakhstan heavily restricts freedom of assembly, association and speech".



Kazakhstan has ratified most international treaties on human rights, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2015), however, national legislation according to civic activists does not comply with the international legal obligations. Legislation and law enforcement practice do not provide adequate remedies and procedures for effective defence.

With respect to freedom of conscience and religion agenda, Kazakhstan's population is ethnically and culturally diverse, adhering to various religions but all living in relative harmony. Nevertheless, maintaining stability is often misused to wrongfully curtail the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. This approach is seen by civic activists as misguided.

Against this background the civil activists repeatedly call upon the national authorities to take urgent measures for deliberate implementation of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, to foster government accountability, ethnic equity, cultural diversity, tolerance, participation and good governance that embed the SDG 16 plus values and form the basis of democratic society.

In 2020 the amendment on tightening penalties for violating the law "On Peaceful Assemblies" was effected. It caused contradictory reaction of the CSO activists' due to the law's offensive nature with respect to the right to freedom of assembly. The amended law was submitted to the

Majlis of the Parliament of Kazakhstan without considering the CSOs recommendations and claims to comply with international standards. Due to COVID-19 quarantine restrictions the discussions in the Parliament under the proposed amendments underwent in an isolated manner without the CSOs participation. The revised law prohibits media to provide photo and video filming of rallies to state authorities. It also mandatorily terminates the rally if the actual number of its participants exceeds the earlier stated by the rally organizer. The filming of demonstrations is seen as a reason to close the media outlet in Kazakhstan. The Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights' analysis of the draft law reveals that some of its provisions will result in more serious restrictions of the freedom of assembly if the law is implemented without needing improvements.

Effective application of the rule of law and access to justice (SDG 16.3); the non-discriminatory laws and policies (SDG 16 b.); the public access to information (SDG 16.10); the inclusive and participatory decision-making (SDG 16.7) are seen instrumental in contributing to the adoption of the law on "On Peaceful Assemblies" in compliance with international standards and requirements.

Subsequently the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Access to Information", which is currently under revision should necessitate free flow of information; promote free and independent media that disseminates information for greater openness to help individuals and civil society work together. This will ultimately lead to better decision-making and more rational responses in times of economic downturn and COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns as regarded by SDG 16 plus.



The restricted access to information during the pandemic attracted great attention from human rights activists. Recent analytical report on "Kazakhstan 2020: freedom of speech in situation of emergency and quarantine", developed by the CSO Adil Soz concluded that the constitutional obligation of state authorities to provide every citizen with the opportunity to get acquainted with the documents, decisions and sources of information affecting their rights and interests was not duly implemented. For example, the resolutions of sanitary doctors were not officially approved or published and were put into effect, as a rule, immediately after signing. They were hardly published in official print media and appeared belatedly on the official websites of local and health authorities. During the pandemic emergency, media representatives also experienced difficulties with the participation in open court processes. These all deprived local mass media from the opportunity to fulfill their constitutional duty to inform citizens about decisions of state authorities that inevitably affected citizens' rights and interests.

Realizing that in the context of an unprecedented coronavirus pandemic, the establishment of certain restrictive measures is fully justified, it should, however, be recognized that these measures

should not lead to unreasonable and arbitrary restrictions on human rights, which, unfortunately, have taken place in Kazakhstan.

Chapter VI

6. Please give 5 examples of Goal 16 plus progress or lack of progress in your country and explain (maximum 1000 words) by concrete examples. This could be in the form of data (both official and citizen's led data) , pictures, graphs

Kazakhstan's accession to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a consistent step towards the country's sustainable development. There are many achievements and, unfortunately, not less challenges related specifically to the SDG 16 plus targets implementation in Kazakhstan as it was discussed earlier. Below is the reference to some SDG 16 plus country's accomplishments and gaps, which reveals the strategic axis of ongoing reforms towards a peaceful, just and inclusive society.

Peaceful Society

1. Culture of peace and nonviolence (SDG 4.7)

The 2030 Agenda pays utmost attention to the early warning, prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation by securing a people-centered approach and providing a voice for marginalized people and groups. The doctrine of “multivector diplomacy”, according to which Kazakhstan develops equal and diversified relations in all development areas embed the foreign policy of Kazakhstan. This is of vital importance to the country as it is located in between



Europe and Asia. It is a link between the Muslim, Christian and Buddhist worlds. In cultural and civilizational terms, Kazakhstan belongs to both the East and the West, where a secular way of life is widespread with a peaceful coexisting with the Islamic heritage in the history of Kazakhs. All of the above contributed to the establishment of a multi-vector policy in relations with foreign states.

The highlighted SDG 16 plus is directly related to the SDG 4.7 on *culture of peace and nonviolence*. It is relevant to the Kazakhstani peacebuilding policy, which aims at extensive support for the resolution of the Syrian conflict. Thus, within the last decade Kazakhstan hosted 12 rounds of talks in the Astana format, which is in line with the UN stand for peace process. Kazakhstan is also an active member of the Collective Security Treaty, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to support its multivector foreign policy.

On 2 January 2019, the Kazakh Partnership for Peace Training Centre (KAZCENT) obtained UN certification to train peacekeepers in the Protection of Civilians and UN Staff Officers for future participation in international peacekeeping operations.

According to the 2018 Global Peace Index Kazakhstan has been ranked at **70th in the list of 163 countries in the Global Peace Index**. The country was recognized as the most peaceful country in the CIS.

2. Violence against women and girls (SDG 5.2)

Recent lockdown measures put girls and women at risk of domestic violence during the pandemic. According to UNICEF, in Kazakhstan, 50% of girls are subjected to violent methods of discipline in the family, and 45% experience psychological aggression and violence. Evidence from May 2020 suggests this remains a significant challenge. According to the Head of the ‘Don’t be quiet’ movement, domestic violence rose at an alarming rate during the pandemic.



The organization’s hotline has received 42,000 calls over the four-month lockdown period. However, only 8,000 of those calls have led eventually to trials and just 4,000 have received justice. This is largely due to the limited operation of courts during the pandemic emergency. In this situation, the CSOs and civil activists provided first aid consultations to the women that are subject to domestic violence.

Currently, the Working Group has been established in the Mazhilis¹ to improve legislation on combating domestic violence with active participation of civil society experts that work hand in hand with parliamentarians and the National Commission for Women, Family and Demographic Policy. The CSOs proposed strong internationally sound recommendations and their voices are being heard.

Justice

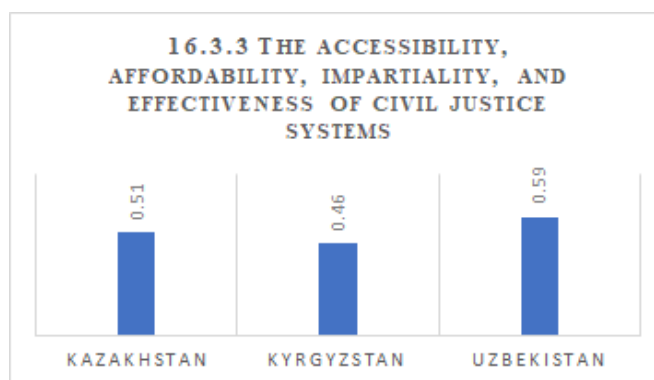
3. Policies for reduced inequalities (SDG 10.4)

The Rule of law and access to justice remain of vital importance for Kazakhstan to become a strong society with democratic reforms of government work and efficient decision-making. This domain has direct links to the SDG target on polices for reduced inequalities and (SDG 10.4). The 2020

¹ Lower Chamber of the Parliament of Kazakhstan

WJP Rule of Law Index ²shows the sustained decrease of Kazakhstan's rating according to eight main indicators: limited power of government institutions, absence of corruption, transparency of government institutions, protection of fundamental rights, security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice and criminal justice. This year it ranked **62nd out of 128 countries and administrative-territorial units**. The country moved up four places in the world assessment and is on the **fourth ranked out of 14 countries** in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia, referring to the increasing gaps in the enlisted sectors.

The reference should be also made to the sdg16.org data to compare the rating of Kazakhstan against the Central Asian overall situation under the target. As the graph depicts, the situation with Kazakhstan's accessibility, affordability, impartiality and effectiveness of civil justice systems according to the available data is relatively similar to the situation in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Most likely, this is due to the Soviet Union legacy and the peculiarity of Central Asian cultural behaviour.



4. *Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all (SDG 8.10)*

Money laundering is a process by which the illicit source of assets obtained or generated by criminal activity. Terrorism financing involves the raising and processing of funds to supply terrorists with resources to carry out their attacks due to non-transparent approach in executing financial transactions.

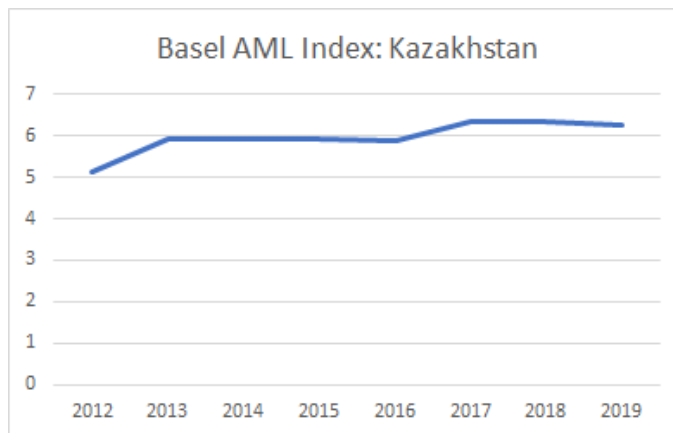
In view of the above, Kazakhstan takes urgency in addressing the international terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, which directly affect the national interests of the country through the encouraging strong financial institutions and mechanisms (*SDG 8.10*). Based on special recommendations of the FATF (Financial Action Task Force on Combating Money Laundering), the financing of terrorism, terrorist acts and terrorist organizations has been recognized as a criminal offense by Kazakhstan. Since 2011 Kazakhstan has been a member of the EGMONT group³, which obliged the Committee of Financial Monitoring of Kazakhstan and the anti-money laundering and combating financing the terrorism (AML/CFT) relevant actors to seek additional

² The WJP Rule of Law index is the world's leading source of original, independent data on the rule of law. It is designed to promote political reforms, directions of development programs, researchers awareness raising with the purpose to strengthen rule of law.

³ The Egmont Group is a united body of 166 Financial Intelligence Units. The Egmont Group provides a platform for the secure exchange of expertise and financial intelligence to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

responses and modern approaches to newly emerged threats and improve its legislative base. The annual report of the 2020 Basel AML Index ranked Kazakhstan **73rd among 141 countries** in terms of the level of risk in the area of illegal money laundering and terrorist financing, meaning there is more work ahead.

Prior to the creation of the Committee of Financial Monitoring (CFM) under the Ministry of Finance of Kazakhstan in 2008 of independent type, the CSOs and civil activists took unprecedented measures and advocacy campaigns to successfully ban the establishment of the CFM under the General Prosecutor's Office. This was a breakthrough in preventing the establishment of the CFM of prosecutorial type, that would violate the business organizations rights.



Inclusive Society

5. Inclusive and participatory decision making (SDG 16.7) and the rest of SDGs

SDG 16.7 directly links to the whole family of SDGs as it provides for efficient decision making and outcomes in all domains. This pillar currently inspires the national authorities and civil society to develop adequate legislation and introduce a modern model of Public Council under the auspices of national/local authorities to voice and defend the interests of the population.



Starting from 2019 the public participation process was enormously threatened by bureaucratic constraints, an inadequate public administration system and the pandemic quarantine restrictions. The civil society called the national authorities and international organizations to introduce appropriate regulations both at international and national level to secure public participation in decision making in virtual mode, including for CSOs from the remote regions and people with disability (PwD).

Other CSO initiatives that can be highlighted as recent breakthroughs relate to the promotion of local self-governance through the active participation in the “open budget” initiative, delivery of transparent State Social Procurement, establishment and amplification of the Public Councils at the grassroots level. These are modern approaches and mechanisms of public participation that largely trigger further positive developments in the sector of inclusive decision making.

Chapter VII

- 1. Engagement and Roles of Parliamentarians in national SDGs mechanism and Review process (especially on SDG 16 Plus) in the last 5 years**
- 2. Role of CSOs in implementation, progress, Monitoring and Review of Goal 16 Plus in your country**

Civil society plays a critical role in monitoring development processes. are civil society-led assessments, independent from gov't-led VNRs, reporting on progress on the SDGs & the #2030 Agenda

As the 2030 Agenda was designed as a global program, its implementation should be adjusted to the national priorities and embed existing strategic plans of development at the national and district levels. In other words, for transferring the SDGs to the national level, government planning agencies are tasked now to review and adjust existing national and sectoral development plans by, *inter alia*, introducing new legislative framework in close partnership with parliamentarians, civil society organizations and business companies. This participation is crucial for the legal drafting activities to meet international standards, stipulated in the SDGs and in line with the national peculiarities and needs.

In 2016 the SDGs were presented in the Senate of the Republic of Kazakhstan and received full support from the side of national authorities and the Parliament of Kazakhstan. The initiative resulted in adoption of a Statement by the Senate⁴ parliamentarians, which notes the need to promote the application of sustainable development principles and their integration into the national legal framework. Further developments on the SDGs implementation by interested stakeholders, including the parliamentarians are currently in progress without any specific outcomes at this stage.

The role of civil society in promoting the 2030 Agenda and SDG 16 plus, in particular, is diverse and extended to:

- voice the interests and rights of target groups;
- promoting right and education-based approach;
- providing expertise in policies and partnerships' development; and
- overseeing the SDGs implementation through a watch-dog function.

The CSOs act as a catalyst of change and provide services that are complementary to the ones by the government agencies. So far, the civil society representatives haven't been involved in any monitoring activities with respect to SDG 16 plus implementation. Most likely this is due to the recent acknowledgment of the 2030 Agenda by the national authorities as key strategic targets of development. More time and patience are needed to involve interested stakeholders and, specifically, the civil society, into the decision making process on the SDG 16 localization, implementation and oversight on the way to a sustainable development path. This is the first

⁴ Upper Chamber of the Parliament of Kazakhstan

attempt to provide a critical overview of the SDG 16 plus targets implementation through the civil society organizations' lense.

Even though the CSOs were not involved in any specific assessment of the SDG 16 plus implementation in the country as discussed above, below are the most successful stories on the SDG 16 plus localization, delivered under the initiative of Kazakhstani CSOs in close partnership with the national/local authorities and other interested stakeholders:

1. Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (SDG 16.6)

Kazakhstan at the high political level fully supports the need to introduce accountable and transparent institutions at all levels through empowering the government/citizens dialogue, efficient decision making and oversight; strengthening the fight against corruption with the use of new technologies to improve the efficiency of public administration. Accountable governance is currently promoted through maintaining the platforms of open data, dialogue, inclusive legal drafting and budgeting. Most of the domain principles are reflected in the current legislation, however, their full introduction lacks practical implementation. To address this issue the Government of Kazakhstan has introduced the Public Councils (PC) under the government auspices to raise their effectiveness. As of today there are more than 200 PCs operating Kazakhstan-wide that gradually increase their monitoring and oversight capacity.



In spite of ongoing reforms, the lack of fiscal transparency still persists and worsens government accountability with increasing opportunities for corruption or poor management. All in all, these enourmously undermine the country's progress towards the SDGs. One of the areas of such deficiencies is in the Social Service Procurement (SSP). Recently the Government and the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan have indicated a need to increase the efficiency of SSP projects and introduce a monitoring and

evaluation mechanism into the SSP system. In view of the above, local CSO, Civil Society Development Organization - ARGO, helped advance the model of monitoring and evaluation of state social procurement, and increase the capacity of state officials and CSOs, which significantly contributed to the application of a more accountable and transparent SSP system in the country. Speaking precisely, necessary conditions have been created for the implementation of SSP evaluation through training activities and pilot SSP evaluations in the regions of Kazakhstan. This initiative resulted in a new cohort of civil sector evaluators and updated "Rules on the Formation, Monitoring of Implementation, and Assessment of the Effectiveness of State Social Procurement". The SSP M&E system is currently employed by the Ministry of Information and Social Development on a regular basis, improving government responsibility and transparency, the delivery of state social services for citizens, and increasing the effectiveness of SSP projects implemented by CSOs.

2. By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration (SDG 16.9)

Birth registration, a measure of the target to ensure a legal identity for all characterise Kazakhstan as a country with an increasing progress, largely due to the CSOs' breakthrough support for vulnerable groups. Birth registration provides a child with a legal form of identity. If a child does not have their birth registered, s/he would be unable to attend school or receive healthcare. The problems can extend beyond just childhood, and without having a legal form of age identification, marriage may occur before the legal age.

Following this notion, the local CSO activists helped introduce the changes in the national Internal Migrant Registration Regulations with the support of the USAID/ARGO Partnership for Innovations Program. The CSO activists identified and engaged in dialogue and cooperation with relevant authorities, bringing to light gaps and corruption risks in the registration process. The initiative assisted more than 220 stateless people, orphans, conditionally released prisoners, and etc. able to access social support and health care services⁵. Due to these efforts children under the age of 14 have a reduced burden for registration, and, therefore, greater access to social care.

3. Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms (SDG 16.5) and Public access to information (SDG 16.10)

CSOs in Kazakhstan were also taking the lead in advocating for transparency due to the lack of medications despite the allocation of huge funds from the state budget for this purpose. In an open letter to the President, human rights defenders noted that government agencies often classify information about the spending of two billion tenge allocated to combat the pandemic as "for official use" and suggested legislative amendments to existing regulations. In its response, the Ministry of



Information and Public Development of Kazakhstan recognized the need to change the procedures and announced the formation of the working group with the participation of civil society representatives.

⁵ <https://csocentralasia.exposure.co/gaps-in-the-law-trap-vulnerable-groups>

Chapter VIII

8. Concrete Recommendations (minimum 3 in each section) for

- **Your national Government**
- **Regional Institutions**
- **Global Institutions**

Recommendations, addressing the Government of Kazakhstan:

1. Strengthen the mechanism of inclusive public participation in the 2030 Agenda localization and implementation, specifically, the vulnerable and marginalized groups (elderly, ethnic minorities, women, youth and children);
2. Align the national legislation and law enforcement practice in the field of ensuring and protecting human rights with the fundamental principles of international law and international standards of human rights. The efforts should be introduced to revise the legislation on the freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; the freedom of peaceful assembly and association in line with the international standards;
3. Promote better public participation in the VNR development through the presentation of civil society case studies.

Recommendations, addressing regional institutions:

1. Facilitate a regional multi-stakeholder platform to foster regional dialogue, cooperation and peer learning for SDG 16 plus policy innovations;
2. Strengthen the capacity of civil society, government and business stakeholders to get a better notion of the SDG 16 plus and, thus, encourage its better implementation at the national level;
3. Encourage and support the national and local civil leaders' participation in the SDG-related regional and global meetings.

Recommendations, addressing global institutions

1. Strengthen the monitoring of national mechanism on SDGs' implementation in countries with special focus on peaceful, just and inclusive society;
2. Develop and introduce the SDG 16 plus global indicators, which reflect the arising challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and associated threats;
3. Launch tailor-made donor assistance programs at the regional and national levels to enhance the implementations of 2030 Agenda and SDG 16 plus, in particular. The technical assistance should include relevant expertise, targeted, *inter alia*, to expand the civic space so that no one is left behind in achieving the SDGs.

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