



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 3024th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 22 November 2023, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Shepherd

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention *(continued)*

Combined nineteenth to twenty-first periodic reports of Morocco
([CERD/C/MAR/19-21](#); [CERD/C/MAR/Q/19-21](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Morocco joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Ouahbi** (Morocco) said that members of the Government, the Parliament, national institutions, 105 civil society organizations, professional organizations, the media and university institutions had participated in the preparation of the State party's report ([CERD/C/MAR/19-21](#)), through wide-ranging consultations.
3. The Moroccan Constitution of 2011 prohibited all forms of discrimination, recognized the equal status of Moroccan citizens and foreign residents and enshrined the principles of religious tolerance, equality and freedom of opinion and expression. Morocco espoused the values of tolerance and mutual understanding between cultures and civilizations.
4. The special status of the Jewish community and the freedom with which Christians practised their religion provided tangible evidence of the State's general policy of guaranteeing freedom of belief. The Council of Moroccan Jewish Communities had been established by a Royal Decree to manage the community's affairs, and it had established the Foundation of Jewish-Moroccan Cultural Heritage to preserve its traditions.
5. Morocco had hosted international meetings that had led to the adoption of the Rabat Plan of Action of 2012 on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred, the Marrakesh Declaration of 2016 on the rights of religious minorities in the Muslim world and the Fez Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to prevent incitement to violence, of 2017.
6. Morocco had received eight visits from special procedure mandate-holders between 2011 and 2018, including a visit by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.
7. A comprehensive reform of the justice system had included the enactment of laws guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary, the development of judicial oversight mechanisms, the adoption of a Judicial Code of Ethics and the drafting of amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure. In addition, the Family Code was being reviewed with a view to enshrining the principle of equality, promoting the achievement of family balance and cohesion and protecting the best interests of the child.
8. A new Press and Publishing Code had been promulgated, a National Press Council had been established as a self-regulatory body for the press and a Right to Information Act had been adopted. Some of the approximately 268,000 associations that had been registered in Morocco addressed issues relating to discrimination, the language of the Amazigh (Tamazight) and Hassaniya culture. More than 7,000 public protests were registered each year. Most were conducted in peaceful conditions and were supervised by the public authorities, with a view to protecting participants.
9. Tamazight had been legally recognized as an official language, and the Amazigh New Year had been recognized as an official national holiday. Steps had been taken to integrate Tamazight into the education system, parliamentary proceedings, litigation, the media, cultural and artistic activities and public life. A special fund had been created for that purpose. Action had also been taken to maintain and rehabilitate the Hassaniya cultural heritage, for instance through the organization of cultural festivals and the provision of support for the activities of the Centre for Hassaniya Studies and Research.
10. A number of Jewish neighbourhoods in historic towns had been restored and rehabilitated. Jewish culture and history had been incorporated into the curriculum at early levels of education, and programmes had been carried out to highlight the Jewish cultural heritage in traditional industries.

11. Legal action was being taken to promote compulsory health coverage, retirement and unemployment benefits for all and social support for groups in situations of poverty or vulnerability. A strategic reform of the health system was designed to ensure sustainable health care for Moroccan citizens and foreigners throughout the country by facilitating access to medical services and upgrading their quality. The number of primary health-care institutions and hospitals had been increased, and mobile coverage ensured access to basic health-care services in remote areas.

12. The education system was being reformed. The goals of the education road map for 2022–2026 included a reduction in the rate of school dropout, the provision of inclusive education for children with disabilities and the elimination of disparities in terms of access to education between groups and territorial areas.

13. Morocco had developed a public employment policy to facilitate access to employment without discrimination. The policy focused on improving the business climate, implementing programmes to support employment and self-employment, developing vocational training programmes and reinforcing methods and mechanisms for mediation and inspection in the professional community. Action to guarantee the right to adequate housing included the reduction of disparities between cities, suburbs and villages, the implementation of a zero-slum urban programme and the adoption of a programme for direct support to families during the period from 2024 to 2028 benefiting certain vulnerable and middle-class groups.

14. Morocco had adopted a national migration and asylum policy and a special strategy to ensure that migrants and refugees enjoyed their rights to education, health, employment, housing, legal and social assistance, access to justice and other public services. It had regularized the status of approximately 50,000 migrants. Two bills had been drafted on the entry and residence of foreigners and the conditions for granting asylum. The Office for Refugees and Stateless Persons had settled the status of 1,337 asylum-seekers and implemented a voluntary return programme for migrants in irregular situations. The Government had adopted an Act on Combating Trafficking in Persons and had established a national commission for its implementation.

15. His country continued to support gender equality. It prohibited all forms of discrimination and violence in its laws, plans and strategies and promoted the economic, social and political empowerment of women. As a result, women's access to senior positions in political parties, the Parliament, constitutional entities, public institutions and private enterprises had increased. The Government had adopted an Act on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It took vigorous action to ensure that they enjoyed their rights in accordance with the principles of equality and non-discrimination, for instance through access to inclusive education and to an enhanced system of health care.

16. **A representative of the National Human Rights Council** said that, from 2019 to 2022, the Council had processed nearly 12,000 complaints, fewer than 15 of which concerned allegations of racial discrimination. Of those, the complaints related for the most part to medical cases, online stigmatizing comments entailing incitement to hatred or racial discrimination, complaints of gender-based violence against a foreign detainee and allegations of discrimination in terms of access to justice for foreigners in irregular situations. The Council and its committees had taken the necessary measures to process complaints, including field visits and mediation and interaction with the competent authorities, while offering guidance to the complainants.

17. While the Council appreciated the fact that there had been some constitutional and legislative progress in Morocco, it considered that compliance with the Convention required additional legal reforms, including the abolition of provisions that might cause racial discrimination, and more vigorous action to combat such discrimination. The Council therefore recommended the establishment of a comprehensive legal framework to combat all forms of racial discrimination and the speedy adoption of the bill amending and supplementing the Criminal Code, in accordance with the recommendations the Council had issued in its 2019 memorandum aimed at aligning the draft Criminal Code with the Constitution and international human rights norms. The Nationality Code should also be

amended, to permit foreign men married to Moroccan women to acquire Moroccan nationality.

18. The Council noted that the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Authority and the National Council for Moroccan Languages and Culture were not yet operational. The Council welcomed the action taken to recognize the official status of Tamazight and Amazigh culture. It was important, however, to adopt all necessary legal, political and financial measures to expedite the implementation of Organic Act No. 26-16.

19. With regard to migrants, the Council welcomed the action taken to protect and promote the rights of foreigners and urged the Government to guarantee respect for the principle of non-refoulement of asylum-seekers. It also requested the Government to adopt legislative bills addressing the entry and residence of foreigners and the conditions for granting asylum. It encouraged the Committee to consider the parallel report that it had recently submitted, since it provided a more detailed view of progress made in implementing the Convention and persistent challenges.

20. **Mr. Balcerzak** (Country Rapporteur) said that the results of the 2014 census were not disaggregated by ethnicity. He wished to know whether the next census would be conducted in 2024 and, if so, whether the demographic data would be disaggregated by ethnicity. He would also appreciate information on measures taken to improve the data collection system, such as the incorporation of variables concerning ethnic origin, and an update on the use of alternative tools aimed at acquiring more detailed information on difficulties facing certain groups and on their socioeconomic situation.

21. The Committee would welcome additional information on whether the Convention could be applied directly by Moroccan courts and whether it served as a source of domestic law. It would also appreciate detailed information on cases in which the provisions of the Convention had been invoked and applied by domestic courts. He would like to know whether training courses on the prohibition of racial discrimination had been provided for members of the judiciary, law enforcement officers, other public officials and lawyers, and whether awareness-raising campaigns on the values and rights enshrined in the Convention had been organized for the general population.

22. He wished to know whether the authorities had discussed the possibility of drafting a general anti-discrimination law and whether the State party had amended its laws prohibiting racial discrimination in order to bring its legal framework, including its definition of racial discrimination, into conformity with article 1 of the Convention.

23. The Committee would be grateful for information on the measures adopted by the State party to amend the Labour Code to enable migrant workers to assume leadership positions within trade unions and to amend the Nationality Code to grant foreign men married to Moroccan women the right to obtain Moroccan nationality. It would be helpful to learn what steps had been taken or were envisaged to incorporate all provisions of article 4 of the Convention into the Criminal Code and to give effect to the recommendation contained in paragraph 10 of the Committee's previous concluding observations ([CERD/C/MAR/CO/17-18](#)) by establishing racist motivation as an aggravating circumstance in criminal offences.

24. He would like to know how many investigations into cases of racial discrimination had been opened under articles 431-2, which punished discrimination by natural persons, and 431-3, which punished discrimination by legal entities, of the amended Criminal Code, and how many had been dropped, how many had resulted in indictments and how many had led to convictions. The delegation was invited to provide specific examples of such cases, in addition to more detailed information on the application, in practice, of section II bis of the Criminal Code on racial discrimination and hatred at sporting events.

25. He would appreciate information on cases in which the provisions contained in article 4 of Organic Act No. 29-11 of 3 March 2011 on Political Parties had been applied in practice. Specific examples of any prosecutions or punishments handed down under Act No. 88-13 on Journalism and Publishing would be welcome. He wondered whether there had been any instances in which the provisions of Act No. 66-16 amending and supplementing Act No. 77-03 on Audiovisual Communication had been implemented. The delegation might also

wish to provide information on any non-legal initiatives aimed at preventing hate speech and hate crimes. The Committee would be interested to learn whether the Government recognized the issue of racist hate speech on the Internet and was taking steps to address it. The Committee had received reports of a rise in derogatory comments and racist and xenophobic hate speech directed towards the Amazigh, black Moroccans and black migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. In view of those reports, he wished to know how many investigations had been opened into racist hate speech and other acts of racial discrimination targeting those groups.

26. **Mr. Guissé** (Country Task Force) said that he wished to know what measures had been taken to ensure that the prevention of, and fight against, racial discrimination formed part of the work and mandates of the bodies responsible for promoting human rights, equality and non-discrimination in the State party. He wondered whether such bodies were mandated to receive and handle complaints of racial discrimination and, if so, whether the delegation would be able to provide concrete examples of complaints received and follow-up measures taken. More specifically, he would like to know whether the State party intended to broaden the mandate of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Authority to include the fight against racial discrimination. The Committee had received reports that the ability of the National Human Rights Council to tackle racial discrimination had been limited by a lack of specific laws, skills and human and financial resources. It would thus appreciate information on any steps taken or envisaged to address that situation.

27. Noting the high number of complaints received by the Office of the Ombudsman, he said that he would welcome information on how many of those complaints related specifically to racial discrimination, with examples of cases in which the authorities had, on the Office's instructions, launched disciplinary proceedings or penalized the perpetrators of acts of racial discrimination. He would be grateful for as many details as possible of the complaints and grievances received by the Office, particularly those relating to racial discrimination, that had been addressed through conciliation proceedings between the authorities and the complainant.

28. It was his understanding that the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Authority, the Family and Children's Advisory Council, the Advisory Council on Youth Affairs and Voluntary Action and the National Council for Moroccan Languages and Culture were not yet operational. The Committee would appreciate an update on their operational status. It would also like to find out about the results of the National Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights 2018–2021, specifically in terms of preventing and combating racial discrimination, whether its outcomes had been evaluated and whether it contained an explicit reference to the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of racial equality. It would be helpful to learn whether the State party had taken steps towards adopting a new action plan and, if so, whether it would expressly mention the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of racial equality. Had any measures been taken to increase the involvement of civil society organizations tackling racial discrimination and of affected communities and individuals?

29. The Committee would welcome information on any steps taken or envisaged to adopt a national action plan to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and on any measures adopted and activities organized as part of the International Decade for People of African Descent. It would appreciate detailed information on the measures taken to promote human rights education, with a particular focus on the Convention and the fight against racial discrimination. What had been the impact of such measures? It would be useful to receive information on the representation of the Amazigh, black Moroccan citizens and non-citizens in school textbooks and programmes, and on whether their history, culture and traditions were taught as part of such programmes. He wished to know whether the new primary school textbooks that had been designed to promote the education of children with disabilities and teach children about diversity, tolerance and living together were being used in practice. He wondered whether teachers received training on diversity and inclusion before using the new textbooks, and whether teachers had been involved in the textbooks' development.

30. The Committee had received reports that black Moroccans and black migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa continued to face discriminatory treatment and abuse. He

wished to know how the State party would step up its efforts to eliminate prejudices, negative stereotypes and stigmatization and what measures it would adopt to promote tolerance and understanding, in line with article 7 of the Convention. The Committee would also appreciate information on the specific measures taken to prevent and tackle the dissemination of racial and xenophobic prejudices and stereotypes in the media and on social networks.

31. **Mr. Kut** (Follow-up Coordinator) said that, in its previous concluding observations, the Committee had requested the State party to provide follow-up information, within one year, on the status of the Tamazight language and racial discrimination against the Amazigh, on efforts to develop a legal and institutional framework to protect refugees and asylum-seekers and on the racial discrimination and xenophobia faced by non-citizens without a residency permit. He wished to thank the State party for its interim report ([CERD/C/MAR/CO/17-18/Add.1](#)), which had been submitted a few months late, and to remind it that the Committee would once again select a number of issues to be followed up within one year and expected a timely interim report in response.

32. In the interim report, the State party had informed the Committee that provisions establishing Tamazight as an official State language had been incorporated into the Constitution. The Committee would appreciate detailed information on the implementation of those provisions in practice. While the interim report did not contain satisfactory information on the establishment of a legal and institutional framework to protect the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers, that matter had been addressed in the State party's latest periodic report. He would be keen to receive further information on the asylum bill mentioned in that report. Information on the steps taken to protect non-citizens who had no residency permit against racial discrimination and xenophobia had also been provided in the periodic report.

33. **Ms. McDougall** said that she would be interested to hear about any forms of indirect discrimination that had been observed within government institutions or the private sector.

34. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he would like to know whether the State party had established bodies to monitor hate speech on the Internet and receive complaints from victims. Had major Internet service providers agreed to assume responsibility for monitoring abuse and removing offensive material?

35. **Mr. Diaby** said that the Committee had received reports that certain associations had been prohibited from holding meetings or taking part in demonstrations. He wished to know why such bans had been introduced and what measures would be taken to overturn them to enable such associations to support efforts to promote and protect the rights contained in the Convention. It would be helpful to learn whether the State party intended to adopt a specific law on the protection of human rights defenders. Morocco had been a transit and destination country for the trans-Saharan slave trade, and about 10 per cent of the Moroccan population were descendants of the victims of that trade. He would like to know whether the State party intended to open an investigation to determine its role and responsibility in the trans-Saharan slave trade and provide reparations to the victims' descendants.

36. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she would be interested to hear whether the State party planned to repeal articles 220 and 222 of the Criminal Code, which violated article 5 of the Convention by providing, inter alia, for the punishment of individuals who sought to convert Muslims to another religion.

The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 11.35 a.m.

37. **Mr. Ouahbi** (Morocco) said that Morocco was a moderate Islamic country with a high degree of political and cultural diversity. It could not be said that there were racial disparities; the high number of mixed marriages meant that the country had become a melting pot of different cultures and races. Noting that the questions put to the delegation seemed to be based on issues that had arisen in other countries, he urged Committee members to focus on matters that were relevant to Morocco. His country had proved its commitment to tackling racial discrimination by signing the Convention and had been a pioneer in doing so.

38. Morocco had never been involved in the slave trade; it had not been a part of the country's culture, and he had been taken aback to receive questions on the matter. His country should not be held accountable for a crime that had been committed elsewhere in Africa. The

large number of residents from other African countries and the resulting competition for jobs meant that racial discrimination could become an issue in the future. He was particularly concerned that Moroccan citizens would feel marginalized in relation to those residents. The Royal Moroccan Football Federation had taken steps to address racial prejudices.

39. Under the Constitution, the Amazigh had the same rights as all other groups in society. Tamazight-speaking social workers had been recruited, and the Parliament was currently considering whether the new Civil Code should be published in Tamazight.

40. **A representative of Morocco** said that a series of laws had been adopted in order to align Moroccan legislation with international instruments in the area of discrimination. The aim was to address the complex nature of discrimination more precisely than would be possible by means of a single law. The possibility of adopting such a single law was, however, under discussion. An effort was also under way to adopt a law that would bring the definition of racial discrimination in Moroccan legislation into line with the one in the Convention. The Government was guided by the practice of international bodies in addressing indirect discrimination. Victims benefited from a number of civil and criminal legal remedies.

41. In Morocco, football was governed by a national federation and several legal bodies chaired by judges, including an arbitration tribunal. Those bodies adhered to international rules concerning incitement to hatred and racial discrimination, including those established by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA); they had drawn on the Convention in a number of judgments. Recently adopted legislation relating to FIFA granted victims of discrimination access to remedies and the ability to lodge criminal complaints through the national football federation or other sports bodies.

42. Reforms to the Code of Criminal Procedure had introduced provisions intended to protect freedom of religion, without discrimination, according to precise rules. Migrants and refugees received information on their rights and responsibilities from lawyers, and information was also communicated through training workshops and a guide that had been published in Arabic and French. Discrimination was considered an aggravating factor, particularly in crimes involving insults, humiliation and threats to physical integrity, including those committed at sporting events.

43. **A representative of Morocco** said that the Convention was included in training programmes for judges and in the human rights training given to the staff of the Office of the Prosecutor General. More than 1,300 judges and other officials had benefited from human rights training, which included training for trainers. Workshops had been held on the subject of human rights in relation to criminal justice, and judges had access to a range of tools that assisted them in drawing on the provisions of the Convention. Such tools were published online in an effort to raise awareness among both judges and the general public. The Office of the Prosecutor General had also produced guides for judges on a range of topics, including how to deal with cases involving torture and ill-treatment.

44. International instruments took precedence over national legislation, and the courts had handed down numerous judgments based on ratified instruments, including a 2018 ruling by a court of appeal that referred directly to the Convention. Since 2018, the courts had dealt with 79 cases of discrimination, inter alia on the grounds of social background, ethnicity, religion and nationality, 72 of which had resulted in convictions. Victims received redress. Legislation had been adopted to address the registration of Amazigh names in the civil registry, and children born in Morocco to immigrants, including persons residing there illegally, were also registered. Specialized agencies had been created to receive complaints relating to racist communications.

45. **A representative of Morocco** said that funding for the National Human Rights Council, an independent constitutional body, had tripled since 2019. The Council's work included targeted initiatives benefiting children and migrants and activities to combat discrimination and ensure equality for persons of Hassaniya heritage. The Council also received complaints, conducted visits and issued recommendations. In 2023, it had received three complaints of discrimination. The Office of the Ombudsman, meanwhile, examined cases of abuse by public bodies, including in access to public services. None of the complaints submitted to it, however, had been categorized as racial discrimination. The law

regulating the Office's work did not distinguish between Moroccan citizens and foreigners. Between 2019 and 2020, the Office had received more than 3,000 complaints and had issued more than 600 recommendations. While around 65 per cent of the recommendations issued since its establishment had been implemented, that figure stood at more than 90 per cent for those issued between 2019 and 2020.

46. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Authority and the Consultative Council for the Family and Children were also constitutional bodies. The Authority was a national, independent entity mandated to address all forms of discrimination by providing opinions and recommendations, receiving complaints and participating in the drafting of public policy and in the Government's efforts to combat discrimination and guarantee equality.

47. **A representative of Morocco** said that human rights education had been incorporated into school curricula and that education inspectors, teachers and civil society had been involved in efforts to ensure that the content of textbooks respected human rights. More than 170 textbooks that were free from discrimination and hate speech had been published for secondary school students, along with more than 110 textbooks that promoted values such as pluralism and tolerance for primary school pupils. Several universities ran courses and carried out research in the areas of human rights and racial discrimination.

48. **A representative of Morocco** said that work had been done to combat extremist discourse, understand the legal and religious arguments that underpinned it and provide alternatives. A plan to strengthen citizenship and tolerance had been developed with the aim of providing children with the skills required to use the Internet without falling prey to extremism. A pilot programme had provided education and rehabilitation to around 280 persons convicted of crimes relating to terrorism or extremism, none of whom had gone on to reoffend. The Government had hosted a number of international conferences on hate speech, violence and incitement, resulting in, for example, the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

49. **A representative of Morocco** said that action to counter hate speech on the Internet and social media included the establishment of ad hoc committees and of a national cybercrime centre within the police, as well as the training of law enforcement officers in ways to investigate such crime, both in Morocco and overseas. Units, including ad hoc units, had been established within regional and local police departments, and four regional forensic laboratories had been created. Changes had been made to the examinations administered during the law enforcement recruitment process in order to allow forensic experts to join police forces. Outreach and awareness-raising campaigns had taken place via civil society organizations and the media to highlight the threats posed by cybercrime and unsafe Internet use.

50. Law enforcement officers had received training on the subject of national security and human rights. A knowledge base was being developed to help ensure that law enforcement agencies respected human rights. All training given to law enforcement officers, whether theoretical or practical, promoted a culture of human rights.

51. **A representative of Morocco** said that the Press Code and codes of conduct for media professionals highlighted the importance of preserving human dignity. Legislation provided for fines for discrimination or prejudice by journalists or media outlets on the grounds of race, gender, colour or ethnicity.

52. The National Press Council had been established in 2016 under legislation regulating the press and implementing regulations on professional ethics. The Council issued press cards and ruled on disciplinary cases involving members of the press or media outlets who had flouted professional ethics. A charter of professional ethics for journalists had been drafted, taking into account their social responsibility to the public. The charter prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, social status or other factors, and it also prohibited hate speech and intolerance. Disciplinary procedures could be initiated against journalists and their media outlets if they did not act in accordance with the principles of the profession.

53. **A representative of Morocco** said that the Supreme Council for Audiovisual Communication was an independent, constitutional body that regulated broadcasters. It was committed to respect for human rights, particularly freedom of expression, human dignity and fundamental freedoms. Morocco had general legislation to combat all forms of discriminatory discourse; it also had legislation specifically addressing that topic for the broadcasting sector. Those texts included the Act on Audiovisual Communication and the terms of reference for public service and private broadcasters, which were regularly updated. The Supreme Council carried out awareness-raising activities, promoting respect for diversity and human rights through the publication of guides and handbooks and providing training for broadcasters and the public. Morocco also participated in international and regional networks to promote respect for diversity and human rights. The Supreme Council had a permanent mechanism in place to monitor all licensed broadcasters' compliance with regulations. Complaints could be lodged, anonymously or not, through an online portal or in person, and information on decisions made on complaints was posted on the Internet. The Supreme Council had made decisions in relation to 800 complaints; many concerned sexist stereotypes, but some related to discriminatory remarks based on colour, ethnic origin, religion or social background. Broadcasters had received fines as a result of those complaints. Communications regarding those fines were made public to underscore the importance of the related issues.

54. **A representative of Morocco** said that the rights of migrants and asylum-seekers were upheld and that they were protected against discrimination. Legal and administrative measures had been taken in cooperation with non-governmental organizations with a view to adopting an inclusive approach to those groups. An office for asylum-seekers had been reopened in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and a ministerial committee on asylum-seekers had been established, with representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights acting as observers. Draft legislation on asylum was being drawn up with the cooperation of a range of stakeholders; the draft's provisions reflected those of the relevant international instruments and espoused a human rights-based approach. In 2014, a strategy had been adopted to include migrants and asylum-seekers in all sectoral programmes, and since then, dozens of programmes and actions had been implemented along those lines with local and international partners.

55. **A representative of Morocco** said that the members of both chambers of the Parliament worked on human rights issues, including those related to the rights under the Convention, on the basis of their constitutional mandate as legislators and their role providing parliamentary oversight of public policy. All new legislation took account of the obligations assumed by Morocco under international treaties.

56. **Mr. Balcerzak** said that the Committee was interested in the demographic composition of the country in terms of ethnic groups. Ethnic origin was referred to in article 1 of the Convention, and such information contributed to the Committee's understanding of the situation in the country. The Committee's view was that ethnicity was a matter of self-identification. He therefore invited the delegation to clarify whether it was possible for individuals to consider themselves to be Moroccan while self-identifying as belonging to different ethnic groups. He would like to know which mechanism was the first port of call for victims of discrimination to lodge complaints.

57. **Mr. Zniber** (Morocco) said that all religious believers, regardless of their denomination, enjoyed the protection of the monarchy. The history and geographic position of Morocco had made it a melting pot of ethnic groups living side by side, with Indigenous Amazigh peoples and populations from the Arabian Peninsula, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Mediterranean region living together. Morocco promoted tolerance and coexistence at the international level, for example through the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence and the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes. In addition, Morocco had presented a resolution against hate speech at the seventy-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly, which had been unanimously adopted. Morocco had hosted the ninth United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Forum in November 2022 and had engaged with the human rights treaty bodies, the Human Rights Council and the special procedures

of the Human Rights Council. The King of Morocco was taking the lead in addressing migration issues within Africa.

58. **Mr. Guissé** said that he would like to know whether the mandate of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Authority had been broadened to include racial discrimination and whether the issue of racial discrimination was explicitly dealt with in the National Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights 2018–2021.

59. **Ms. McDougall** said that she would like the delegation to provide a copy of any guidance documents on indirect discrimination that were in use in Morocco. It would be interesting to learn what measures were being taken to combat racial discrimination in practice, not just in law, and whether affirmative action was being taken to establish equality where it was lacking.

60. **A representative of Morocco** said that the Government had committed to updating the National Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights 2018–2021. The plan, which had been adopted in 2017, had been the outcome of a decade-long process that had involved all relevant stakeholders and had taken into account the recommendations of the National Human Rights Council and civil society organizations. It contained around 450 measures related to human rights, including on the topics of discrimination and equality, 88 per cent of which had been implemented, and it highlighted the issue of discrimination against migrants, asylum-seekers and women.

61. **A representative of Morocco** said that complaints of discrimination in access to public services could be lodged with the Ombudsman. An online portal was in place for Moroccans and foreign nationals to lodge complaints, which were referred to the competent authorities. The National Human Rights Council, which had 12 commissions throughout the country, could also register complaints.

62. **A representative of Morocco** said that discrimination on the grounds of colour was a crime that could be brought before the courts. The online portal had been put in place to facilitate access to justice. The Office of the Prosecutor General had a hub for receiving complaints of racial discrimination and two specialized judges assigned to deal with such cases. Penalties had been handed down for acts of racial discrimination, and work had been undertaken with civil society organizations to facilitate the complaints process.

63. **Mr. Diaby** said that he wished to know whether the associations for the protection of groups protected under the Convention had been consulted in the lead up to the constructive dialogue. If so, it would be useful to learn how many meetings had taken place and how many associations had been involved. He invited the delegation to indicate whether the State party had any plans to adopt legislation affording protections to human rights defenders. While slavery was not a part of Moroccan culture and the practice of slavery in the region predated the establishment of modern-day Morocco, it would be useful for the State party to undertake research on that topic and on the impact of the vestiges of slavery on the Moroccan population of African descent.

64. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she would like the delegation to comment on reports that a law dating from 2003 on combating racial discrimination was not applied in practice. It would be interesting to learn how the mechanisms against hate speech in the press interacted with the judicial system to combat such practices.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.