



**International Convention on
the Elimination of All Forms
of Racial Discrimination**

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Summary record of the 3026th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 23 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 (continued)
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1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Morocco joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Balcerzak** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would welcome examples of affirmative action taken to combat the multiple forms of discrimination affecting the Amazigh, black Moroccans and non-citizens, including migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers from sub-Saharan Africa. The delegation might wish to describe the results of such action and explain what measures had been adopted to tackle the intersectional discrimination facing women who were Amazigh, black or non-citizens. The Committee would appreciate it if the delegation would comment on reports that the civil and political rights of Saharans had been restricted and that Saharans were subjected to frequent stop-and-search checks by law enforcement officers.
3. It would be useful if the State party could provide statistics on the representation of the Amazigh and black Moroccans in senior government positions and political life. He would be interested to hear, for instance, what percentage of decision-making posts within local and central government bodies were held by individuals belonging to those groups and what had been done to ensure that members of those groups were able to participate effectively in political life at all levels. He would also welcome details of any specific measures taken to guarantee, in law and in practice, that Amazigh and black Moroccan activists and human rights defenders were able to enjoy their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and he would like to hear about any recent action taken by the State party to tackle poverty among the Amazigh and black Moroccans. More specifically, what had been done to improve those groups' access to accommodation, education, employment and health care, and what had been the results of those efforts?
4. The Committee wished to know what measures had been taken to safeguard the land rights of the Amazigh, particularly Amazigh women, and to protect them from land dispossession. The delegation might wish to comment on reports that some members of the Amazigh community had been forcibly displaced from their land as a result of development projects. In view of reports of the declining use of Tamazight, the language of the Amazigh, he wished to know whether the measures implemented to preserve the Amazigh culture had been effective and whether the State party agreed that there was room for improvement in how the language was promoted. The delegation was invited to explain why Tamazight was rarely taught in schools and completely absent from the preschool curriculum. The Committee would welcome clarification of why teachers of the language needed to pass Arabic and French exams, while teachers of French and Arabic were not required to learn Tamazight.
5. He wished to know what steps had been taken to implement Organic Act No. 26-16, which provided for the use of Tamazight in a variety of sectors. It would be helpful to learn what measures had been taken or were envisaged by the State party to establish Tamazight as an official language of the courts. He wondered whether the Amazigh could easily access public services, including health care, in their language and whether public documents were issued in Tamazight. The delegation was invited to explain why Act No. 04-20 on the Electronic National Identity Card made no mention of the Tamazight language or alphabet. It would be useful to hear about any measures taken or envisaged to increase the prevalence of Tamazight in the media.
6. He would be interested to learn whether members of the Amazigh community had been consulted prior to the dissolution of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture and the transfer of its mandate and resources to the National Council for Moroccan Languages and Culture.
7. In view of reports that some civil registrars had refused to register infants with Amazigh names, he wished to know what steps had been taken to ensure that registrars

complied fully with a Ministry of Internal Affairs circular of 2010 that established that citizens had the right to register the names of their choice, including Amazigh names.

8. The Committee would appreciate information on whether victims of racial discrimination had access to free legal aid and whether such aid was guaranteed, both in law and in practice. The delegation might wish to comment on reports that certain groups had been denied access to legal aid because they had been unable to provide the required documentation. It would be useful to learn what measures had been taken to facilitate the filing of complaints of racial discrimination and to reverse the burden of proof in discrimination cases.

9. He would like to know whether racial profiling was officially prohibited in the State party. How did the State party deal with reports of harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, excessive use of force and forced relocation affecting the Amazigh community and black Moroccans?

10. **Mr. Guissé** (Country Task Force) said that he wished to know what steps the Government had taken towards repealing the articles of Act No. 02-03 of 2003 that criminalized irregular immigration and bringing the act into line with the State party's international obligations in the area of migration.

11. The delegation was invited to comment on reports that local governments had legalized clauses in the by-laws of cooperative properties stipulating that their apartments could not be leased to individuals of sub-Saharan origin and that notices to that effect had been put on display in certain residential buildings. The delegation might also comment on claims that many migrants and refugees had been unable to obtain legal authorization to work, due to documentation requirements and the fact that their residence permits were often issued for just one year at a time.

12. He would like to know what the State party had done to address reports that certain medical establishments had refused to treat migrants and refugees of sub-Saharan origin and that such migrants and refugees had been unable, for lack of the necessary documentation, to enrol their children in school. It would be helpful to learn what steps the State party had taken to ensure that asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants, including those in an irregular situation, had effective and equal access to adequate housing, employment, health services and education. The Committee would be grateful for a description of the measures taken by the State party to prevent and combat racial discrimination and xenophobia directed at non-citizens and to ensure that non-citizens had access to justice. Which institutions were responsible for supporting the integration of non-citizens and tackling the racial discrimination, racism and xenophobia that they faced?

13. He invited the delegation to outline the steps taken to ensure the application, without discrimination, of the principle of non-refoulement. Noting that migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees had been subjected to racial profiling, forced relocation and arbitrary arrest and detention, he said that he would appreciate information on the investigations carried out into such incidents, the proceedings initiated, the penalties imposed and the compensation provided to victims. The delegation might provide information on the outcome of the investigation into the conduct of law enforcement officers during the incident that had taken place at the border with Spain at Melilla on 24 June 2022, which had resulted in the death of 23 migrants.

14. It would be helpful to learn what steps the State party had taken towards the adoption of a legal and institutional framework for the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers that was consistent with international standards, that integrated the non-refoulement and non-discrimination principles and that provided for a procedure for determining refugee status. He would be interested to hear about any measures taken or envisaged to establish a national legal framework for the protection of stateless persons and to prevent and reduce cases of statelessness, particularly among children born in the State party. Certain hospitals had reportedly refused to provide parents with the documents needed to register their children's birth until the parents paid the childbirth expenses. What had the Government done to increase access to free maternity services to minimize the risk that children whose parents were unable to pay would become stateless?

15. **Ms. Ali Al-Misnad** said that she wished to commend the State party for the work that its universities were carrying out in the area of social sciences, which was far more advanced than the work done in that field in other Arab countries. She wondered whether the transfer of the mandate of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture to the National Council for Moroccan Languages and Culture would have an adverse impact on efforts to promote the Amazigh culture and language. The Committee would appreciate information on the enrolment rates of Amazigh children at all levels of education and would like to know whether members of the Amazigh community had access to high quality higher education. How many Amazigh students progressed to that level?

16. **Mr. Amir** said that he would be interested to learn how the State party interpreted article 15 of the Convention, particularly in view of the situation in Western Sahara.

17. **Mr. Diaby** said that he would like to hear about any measures taken to make the tax and legal framework more flexible for women entrepreneurs, in order to promote their empowerment. It would be useful to the Committee to learn whether proceedings had been initiated against perpetrators of violence against Amazigh women and black women and, if so, whether those proceedings had led to convictions. The Committee would appreciate an explanation of why some associations had been shut down and how the State party planned to eradicate obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of association by the groups covered by the Convention.

18. The delegation might provide information on any convictions and penalties handed down to individuals, including journalists and social media influencers, who had used the Internet to disseminate hate speech targeting the Amazigh, immigrants and black persons. He would like to know how the Amazigh and black persons were represented in school textbooks and what measures would be implemented to ensure that Tamazight was used at all levels of government.

19. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she wondered whether legislation that enshrined Arabic, and not Tamazight, as the official language of the courts was unconstitutional. She would like to know how Tamazight was interpreted in court and whether the same service was provided for other languages. The Committee would welcome official statistics on the size of the Amazigh community. According to some reports, more than half the State party's population was Amazigh.

20. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that she wished to know how restrictions on migrants' freedom of movement were imposed and what procedural safeguards were in place to prevent abuse by the officials responsible for enforcing them. She would also welcome an update on the situation of the migrants injured during the violent incident at the Melilla border in 2022, including how they had been dealt with by the Moroccan judicial and government authorities.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at 11 a.m.

21. **Mr. Zniber** (Morocco) said that it was important to recall that most of the dynasties that had ruled Morocco for more than a millennium had been Amazigh. That community had therefore made an immense contribution to Moroccan society, and it had also been at the vanguard of the resistance during the French protectorate. All political parties included the Amazigh population in their activities and policies, and the Head of Government was of Amazigh origin. The Government tolerated the activities of the small number of Saharans activists and did not prevent them from using their Moroccan nationality to travel to Geneva to criticize the country, despite the fact that some separatists had taken up arms. Indeed, one separatist had been described by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders as ineligible for the status of human rights defender. The right to self-determination, which did not equate to a right to separatism, must not violate territorial integrity. Moreover, legal norms must be read with social and historic context in mind. The Government led the way in Africa in upholding the right to self-determination.

22. **A representative of Morocco** said that the designation of Tamazight as an official language had been followed by the declaration of a year of Amazigh culture and the adoption of a comprehensive plan to promote the language's official status in the areas of justice, public administration, public services, education and vocational training, audiovisual communication and culture. There were almost 2,000 Amazigh schools in the country and

manuals and programmes had been created for the teaching of Tamazight at the preschool, primary and secondary levels. Teaching staff and school inspectors received continuous training on Amazigh culture and the language was gradually being introduced in higher education and training facilities.

23. Tamazight was promoted in the justice sector through an agreement that had been concluded between the Ministry of Education and the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture, as well as via training for officials of the justice system and through the translation of laws and decrees. The number of radio and television broadcasts in Tamazight had risen, and official declarations were translated or interpreted into the language on Amazigh channels. An effort was made to mainstream the use of Tamazight, for example on road signs and in official documents. Amazigh culture was promoted through more than 400 projects, including literature prizes and regional initiatives, and through its dissemination at the national and international levels and the documentation of tangible and intangible elements of Amazigh heritage.

24. **A representative of Morocco** said that the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture had signed a cooperation agreement with several ministries on the promotion of Amazigh culture and history. The Institute had worked to codify Tamazight and to promote the use of written Tamazight in education, publishing, digital media and administration. The Institute also promoted Amazigh culture within government ministries.

25. **A representative of Morocco** said that Moroccan citizens could give their children the names of their choosing, and all legal requirements in that regard applied equally to all persons. A new civil status law, which was in line with the legislation on the official status of Tamazight, the Amazigh language, required all names to be written in the Tamazigh, Arabic and Latin alphabets. Its implementing decree identified names that could not be used. However, civil registry officials could authorize the use of some of them, on an ad hoc basis. A process to update the civil registry was under way. All complaints relating to the right to choose a name were investigated. When registrations were rejected, it was generally because the necessary documentation was lacking, and not because of the choice of name. No complaints relating to names had been lodged prior to 2023.

26. **A representative of Morocco** said that a human-centred approach was taken to deportations, which were strictly governed by law and subject to procedural safeguards, including a requirement that administrative decisions should be subject to appeal. Asylum-seekers, refugees and other persons whose lives were at risk were not subjected to refoulement. Officials responsible for deportations were highly trained, including by international partners, and the Government had proposed a regional charter on humanized border management. There was no institutional discrimination against migrants; some 50,000, mostly from Africa, had benefited from a regularization campaign.

27. The relocation of migrants was undertaken in strict compliance with the law and with the aim of protecting them from human traffickers, who often forced them to live in deplorable conditions. Additionally, the authorities had saved more than 90,000 persons attempting to migrate irregularly by boat. The status of more than 120,000 migrants had been regularized, and the validity of their status had recently been extended from one to three years, with the possibility of renewal. The tragedy at the Melilla border had demonstrated the extreme dangers posed by human trafficking networks and the need for international cooperation to address the problem. The incident had seen more than 2,000 persons attack law enforcement officials in a show of unprecedented violence, and the officials involved had responded with professionalism, proportionality and good judgment, without using lethal weapons. All injured persons had received the necessary emergency health care, and a thorough investigation had been undertaken.

28. **A representative of Morocco** said that the impartial investigation into the incident at the Melilla border had found that a group of migrants had, at the behest of traffickers, attempted to breach the border, and law enforcement officials had responded using force. Regrettably, 23 migrants had been killed, some during a stampede, and 77 migrants and 140 law enforcement officials had sustained injuries. The authorities had identified four of the deceased, one of whom had been buried by his family. The Government had submitted information on the incident to four special procedure mandate holders, and it had provided

details concerning one of the persons who had gone missing during the incident to the Committee on Enforced Disappearances.

29. **A representative of Morocco** said that migrants could access primary and emergency health care and medical testing in public hospitals on an equal footing with Moroccan citizens; around 45,000 migrants had benefited from those services between 2019 and 2021. Under a national health-care strategy for 2020–2025, migrants and refugees received emergency care and social protection, and drugs were provided to them free of charge through partnerships with organizations, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Campaigns were organized to raise awareness of the right of migrants and refugees to health-care services provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and health care was provided to the children of migrant workers.

30. Migrants and refugees were allowed to enrol in State housing programmes. Temporary housing programmes for migrants were implemented in partnership with international and local NGOs. Some 500 people enrolled in such programmes annually. Over 3,800 unaccompanied migrant children had received services, and some had been housed in temporary accommodation. The Government was adopting a comprehensive policy to provide decent housing to refugees with a view to protecting their economic and social rights. Efforts were made to facilitate access for migrants and their children to cultural events and activities with the aim of developing a culture of tolerance and coexistence. A range of initiatives had been implemented to combat hate speech, including workshops for journalists, awareness-raising campaigns and summer camps.

31. **A representative of Morocco** said that, under the country's legislation, children had the right to education regardless of their legal or administrative status from the age of 4 until they were 16. Efforts were being made to integrate all children into the education system without discrimination, including children of migrants. Some 6,500 migrant children from 43 countries were enrolled in education. Social and language support, school meals and school equipment were provided with a view to ensuring their educational success. A manual on facilitating access to education had been published in 2018 to guide those efforts.

32. **A representative of Morocco** said that the legislation on labour contracts for migrant workers in a regular situation had been simplified to facilitate their integration in the labour market. Employers were no longer obliged to provide documents proving that they had been unable to hire a worker from within the country before hiring a migrant for a specific post. In the period from 2015 to August 2023, work permits had been issued for 2,036 people, 40 per cent of whom were women. In the same period, over 5,000 migrants had been included in the national database of jobseekers, and many of them had received training. Over 1,000 migrants had participated in job application and placement programmes, and 188 had found employment. Revenue generation programmes for migrants had also been implemented.

33. **A representative of Morocco** said that his country had made significant efforts over the last 20 years to ensure gender equality and combat discrimination on the grounds of gender. Since 2012, three gender equality strategies had been developed, the most recent of which aimed to ensure women's rights in line with United Nations instruments and the recommendations of United Nations agencies. The strategies informed national policies for women. New legislation had been adopted and new agencies had been established to combat discrimination and ensure equality. The strategies provided for plans and programmes in a variety of fields, with one example being a programme on women's economic empowerment. A strategy was also in place on gender sensitivity in the water and sustainable development sectors. Plans were in place to ensure women's participation in public life and their access to decision-making roles and government positions. The Centre of Excellence for Gender Budgeting under the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance had been established in line with the strategies. Plans were also in place to integrate women into rural development efforts.

34. **A representative of Morocco** said that the King of Morocco attached great importance to the empowerment of women and the principle of equality. Legislative and regulatory initiatives had been implemented for the elections in 2021 to strengthen women's political participation and representation, including in the legislative branch. The electoral

system for both houses of the Parliament had been revised, which had led to an increase in the proportion of female representatives, from 21 per cent in 2016 to 24 per cent in 2021. Fourteen women held elected office. A fund had been established to encourage women's political participation, and the representation of women in local and regional political bodies and in employers' associations had also improved significantly.

35. **A representative of Morocco** said that Tamazight held official status in Morocco, in line with royal guidance issued by the King and the 2011 Constitution, and that legislation had been adopted that provided for Tamazight to be used more extensively in public life and education, including in the justice system. Any person involved in any nature of court proceedings had the right to speak Tamazight throughout the process, and interpretation was provided free of charge. Some 100 women had been hired to provide interpretation services and 442 Tamazight speakers worked in the justice system. The language was also taught to members of the Supreme Council of the Judiciary. The laws and regulations on legal aid did not discriminate against foreign nationals. Every year, the Government provided legal aid worth some \$6 million.

36. **A representative of Morocco** said that measures had been implemented to ensure access to justice for Tamazight speakers, including awareness-raising to inform victims of crime of the importance of recourse to justice. Videos had been produced that explained the crime of human trafficking and set out the services provided to victims, and measures had been taken to appropriately deal with complaints from migrants and asylum-seekers. A number of prosecutors were specialized in human rights issues, and complaints mechanisms had been developed using modern communication tools. Complaints no longer had to be lodged in person.

37. **A representative of Morocco** said that, under the Constitution, the civil and political rights of all citizens were recognized without discrimination. The legislation on associations took international standards into account, and the right to join associations was not restricted. Associations must have a permit from a competent authority, but they could conduct their activities and assemblies without restrictions. The right to peaceful assembly was protected under the law, as long as a permit had been acquired. Public gatherings were dealt with in line with the legislation. The authorities ensured that when the police intervened to disperse gatherings, they did so in an orderly manner and with respect for citizens' rights, and only in cases where the regulations were flouted or public order was jeopardized.

38. Measures had been taken over the preceding decade to improve women's access to collective lands. The Ministry of the Interior, which was responsible for the management of those lands, treated women on an equal footing with men. The legislation on collective lands had been amended to ensure that women had access to them on an equal footing with men.

39. **A representative of Morocco** said that, in line with the terms of reference for the administrative mechanism responsible for the regulation of audiovisual media, efforts continued to be made to ensure multiculturalism and multilingualism. A television channel established in 2010 and offering a range of programming in Tamazight and other languages was broadcast throughout the country, and Tamazight radio programming had a weekly audience of some 6 million people. In 2018, Radio Azawan had received a broadcasting permit; it broadcasted music, including Amazigh music, 24 hours a day.

40. **A representative of Morocco** said that the most recent terms of reference for broadcasters included a very broad definition of discrimination and set out broadcasters' obligation to promote a culture of equality and diversity. Awareness-raising measures had been taken to combat stereotypes. Penalties were systematically handed down to all broadcasters, even those with smaller audiences, for airing stigmatizing or discriminatory content. Decisions regarding such penalties, which could be consulted on the website of the Supreme Council for Audiovisual Communication, demonstrated a broad interpretation of discriminatory discourse, regardless of the grounds on which it was based.

41. **A representative of Morocco** said that structural discrimination at the institutional or public policy level ran entirely counter to Moroccan values and was inconsistent with the country's history and cultural heritage.

42. **Mr. Ouahbi** (Morocco) said that it seemed that there were some misunderstandings regarding discrimination against Amazigh people. The Prime Minister and several other Government ministers were Amazigh. He himself was Amazigh and had never experienced discrimination. As part of his mandate from the King, as Minister of Justice, to monitor women's equality, he had engaged with 1,100 associations and NGOs, including organizations of different ethnic groups. He had not identified any issues in relation to equality. The fact that the speaker of the lower house of the Parliament was Saharan demonstrated that Morocco had risen above its demographic differences.

43. Turning to Mr. Amir's remarks regarding the right to self-determination and the provisions of the Convention and United Nations resolutions on peace and security, he noted that the behaviour of Algeria, which neighboured Morocco, was not in line with those principles. The launching of missiles towards Morocco from Algerian territory was apparently a terrorist act. Self-determination could not be imposed from the outside. It must be based on the will of the Moroccan people, who had chosen independence. Morocco and Algeria had shared a common fight for independence, and he hoped that they would be able to work in harmony in building the Maghreb Region.

44. With regard to the situation of the Jewish community in Morocco, he drew attention to the fact that Jewish law was integrated into the Moroccan justice system, and that one of the King's advisers was Jewish.

45. Morocco had fought against racial discrimination even before the ratification of the Convention. Economic migrants had been transferred to Morocco by a neighbouring country and were welcomed, notwithstanding the impact on the local economy. He wondered whether the fact that some countries took in migrant doctors, engineers and scientists but refused economic migrants, who remained in Morocco, could be considered a form of discrimination. He had never heard the term "black Moroccans", and it would not have occurred to him to use it. He had never considered the ethnicity of others in his professional life. Morocco was a country where all peoples could live in harmony.

46. **Mr. Balcerzak** said that the Committee had due regard for the State party's diverse culture and rich history. He understood that all persons resident in Morocco enjoyed the right to self-identification and were entitled to have their ethnic background recognized.

47. He invited the delegation to confirm that a population census would be held in 2024. While he appreciated the information provided on legal aid and support services, he wished to know whether free legal aid was available irrespective of a person's administrative status.

48. **Mr. Ouahbi** (Morocco) said that the Ministry of Justice had been allocating budgetary funds for legal aid for a number of years. Legal aid was provided to persons who proved that they were unable to afford assistance, especially in criminal proceedings or cases concerning family-related issues, employment incidents and certain other matters. No attention was paid to a person's administrative status.

49. It was difficult to determine whether individuals were Saharans, Amazighs or of some other origin. A person's origin was not determined by a legal or institutional authority, and it was not based on geographical data.

50. **Mr. Balcerzak** said that persons should presumably be permitted to determine their own ethnicity.

51. **A representative of Morocco** confirmed that a population census was scheduled for 2024.

52. **A representative of Morocco** said that written instructions had been submitted by the Public Prosecution Service to all judges regarding illegal immigrants and refugees in vulnerable conditions, according to which it was necessary to establish their nationality, age and social status and to determine whether they were victims of an offence. If they were victims, they should not be held criminally responsible if they had perpetrated offences under threat or coercion, and they should be permitted to change their current residence in order to conceal their identities. They were also exempted from the payment of fees in administrative cases and in cases of appeal, and they benefited with their family members from free legal aid.

53. Priority was given to the protection of women and children victims of violence. In 2023 a total of 3,227 complaints had been submitted electronically and about 93,000 complaints had been submitted by other means. Investigations were being conducted in 23,879 cases.

54. All ethnic groups were entitled to the same judicial services. Receptionists and clerks in the courts spoke Tamazight, and complaints in Tamazight were received both by telephone and in person. The audiovisual media broadcast programmes on Amazigh culture.

55. **Mr. Balcerzak**, referring to self-identification, said that the Committee respected the decisions taken by individuals, including those who were unwilling to affiliate with a particular ethnicity. It also sought to ensure that States parties respected the choices made by individuals in that regard. The Committee was not suggesting that the Amazigh population was denied recognition.

56. **Mr. Guissé** said that he wished to know whether migrants in an irregular situation had access to health care. With regard to the resettlement of people for purposes of security, he considered that a certain amount of caution should be exercised when persons were removed to places in the south, which might reflect territorial or geographic discrimination. In relation to the Melilla tragedy of 2022, he would welcome additional information on any follow-up to the investigations conducted by the Public Prosecution Service.

57. **Ms. McDougall** said that she would be interested to hear about the situation of migrants transiting through Morocco to Europe. She would like to know whether an agreement or a memorandum of understanding on the handling of migrants had been signed with the European Union and whether the transit of migrants would be impeded by any such agreement.

58. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she wished to know whether interpreters were assigned in the courts to persons who were unable to speak Arabic or Tamazight, such as migrants and asylum-seekers. With regard to the repression of hate speech and racist propaganda in the media, she would like to know whether there were procedures for prosecuting journalists who published hate speech and whether the regulatory bodies referred such case files to the courts. She would be grateful for an explanation of the State party's failure to implement legislation dating back to 2003 on means of combating racial discrimination.

59. **Mr. Diaby** said that he would like to receive information regarding measures to provide more flexible taxation and legal procedures for women in general and vulnerable women protected under the Convention in particular. He would also like to find out whether school textbooks contained historical information regarding people of African descent as well as the Amazigh and Jewish populations. He wished to know whether the Government planned to take any action to mark the International Decade for People of African Descent, which would end in 2024.

60. **Mr. Amir** said that 1.5 million Algerians out of a total population of about 9 million had died during the war of independence. He paid tribute to King Mohammed V and King Hassan II of Morocco, who had hosted about 500,000 Algerians during the war. Algeria continued to have close relations with the Moroccan people. The claim that the Saharans had been integrated into Moroccan society implied that they had never previously formed part of that society. Noting that Western Sahara had previously been colonized by Spain, he said that the right to self-determination was a concept from which many countries had benefited.

61. **Mr. Ouahbi** (Morocco) said that his country's moderate and tolerant Islamic culture was opposed to all forms of discrimination. However, Morocco faced challenges and the current international conflicts, particularly the situation in Africa, had triggered a certain amount of hate speech and discrimination. The interactive dialogue with the Committee was therefore of great importance, since it would enrich his country's understanding of the issues and encourage it to promote best practices. Morocco was committed to the implementation of the human rights treaties that it had ratified and it would respect the Committee's observations and recommendations.

62. As the Government wished to take international norms into account in its legislative amendments, it would focus to a greater extent on measures to combat racism when updating the National Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights. It also hoped that the new

Criminal Code would reflect the aspirations of the Moroccan people. Thanks to the landmark Direct Social Support Programme, the authorities had successfully managed the ramifications of the recent earthquake that had struck the country, with the financial and moral support of Moroccan society as a whole.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.