



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
29 February 2024

Original: English

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Seventy-fifth session

Summary record of the 18th meeting*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 22 February 2024, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Crăciunean-Tatu

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports *(continued)*

(a) Reports submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant
(continued)

Seventh periodic report of Sweden (continued) ([E/C.12/SWE/QPR/7](#);
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1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Sweden joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair** invited the delegation to reply to the questions raised by Committee members at the previous meeting.
3. **A representative of Sweden** said that the country was one of only a handful to have achieved the United Nations official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income, with a set annual budget of 56 billion kronor (SKr) for the period 2023–2026. Deductions of the cost of receiving asylum-seekers and persons in need of protection were limited to 8 per cent of the yearly budget over the same period. The Government was in the process of reforming the country's development assistance programme and was implementing a new overarching policy in view of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia. While Ukraine and other Eastern European countries were the focus of the new policy, the Government's commitment to providing assistance to other regions, including Africa, Asia and Latin America, would remain strong. The Government planned to expand the donor base for, and strengthen the effectiveness of, the implementation of humanitarian assistance, including support to refugees. There was no plan or strategy to reduce the amount of funding provided to the United Nations or the country's participation in development projects, and any change made to current levels would merely be the result of the regular selection of implementing partners.
4. Many students registered with the public employment services to find work while studying. Excluding full-time students, the youth unemployment rate stood at around 10 per cent, and the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training was among the lowest in the European Union. The Swedish Public Employment Service was responsible for providing young people with individual support to help them enter the labour market or progress to further education. The job guarantee for young people was a framework programme to provide support measures, including work experience, motivation courses, labour market training and wage subsidies, to young people between the ages of 16 and 24 years who were unemployed and who had been registered with the Swedish Public Employment Service for at least three months over a four-month period.
5. **A representative of Sweden** said that high-quality education was key to enable young people to establish themselves in the labour market in the long term. In 2023, the Government had made legislative changes to improve planning in upper secondary education. Municipal adult education had been better tailored to labour market needs, and around 40 per cent of students had gone on to join the labour market and approximately 20 per cent had progressed to higher education courses in 2023. The vast majority of people enrolled in vocational training had jobs and most had been born abroad. The Government had taken measures to expand higher vocational training programmes in 2024.
6. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Government used several different methods to measure poverty, including relative poverty, material and social deprivation and the low-income standard indicators, and measured the effects of poverty and being at risk of poverty. Sweden had a two-tier social insurance system, one for residents and another for persons in work, which covered platform workers, self-employed people and persons engaged in other non-standard forms of employment.
7. **A representative of Sweden** said that the gender pay gap and the number of women working part-time had steadily decreased over the previous decade. The National Mediation Office had been tasked with assessing the impact that income from wages and from other sources had on gender equality and was due to submit a report on its findings on 1 October 2024. The Equality Ombudsman was responsible for enforcing the prohibition of pay discrimination under national law, and employers were required to take active steps to

prevent such discrimination, including conducting pay surveys to correct any anomalies in their wage structures. Regulations in that area would be strengthened after the European Union directive on pay transparency entered into force.

8. Fathers accounted for approximately one third of all paid parental leave. The parents of less than a quarter of the children born in 2021 had shared parental benefits equally between them. However, the number of parents that did so had increased over time. As men's share of unpaid childcare responsibilities increased, so too did their share of unpaid domestic work. The Government had passed legislation to allow each parent 90 days of parental leave, which was not transferable between them. Statistics for 2022 had shown that women still performed more unpaid housework than men, who spent more time in paid work. However, unpaid care of family members was relatively evenly distributed between both sexes.

9. The proposed amendments to labour legislation described in paragraph 145 of the State party's report (E/C.12/SWE/7) had entered into force in October 2022. Only around 13 per cent of employees aged between 20 and 64 years had had fixed-term employment contracts in 2022, and that proportion had been declining over the previous five years. The vast majority of berry pickers applied for work permits and were recruited by companies in a third country. The Government was making significant changes to the labour migration system, and the rise in the minimum income threshold for work permits would affect the berry industry. A recent report following an inquiry into labour migration contained a proposal to refuse work permits for sectors in which labour exploitation was widespread, which included the berry sector. The Government was reviewing the proposals contained in the report.

10. Economic, social and cultural rights were enshrined in article 2 of the Instrument of Government, which was one of the country's four fundamental pieces of legislation. Pursuant to that article, public institutions must ensure the right to employment, housing and education; promote sustainable development and equal opportunities for all; safeguard the rights of children; combat discrimination; and protect the ethnic, linguistic and religious rights of the Sami People and other minorities.

11. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Government had abolished an investment funding scheme for new rental housing and student accommodation that had been introduced by the previous Government in 2016, on the grounds that it had been very expensive and politically controversial and had proved ineffective. No formal evaluation of the scheme had been carried out. The view of the current Government was that the housing shortage could not be resolved with costly subsidies.

12. The Government had commissioned an inquiry to review the rules on rent caps for newly built apartments, as had been requested by stakeholders in the rental market. The inquiry had also been tasked with proposing measures to facilitate the leasing of houses by private individuals in order to make more efficient use of existing housing stock. The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning was developing proposals to relax construction requirements for student accommodation. To provide more housing in the short term, the Government had introduced planning incentives for municipalities to convert business premises into residential buildings or construct new single-family dwellings. The Government had commissioned an inquiry in order to devise a new rent-to-buy model, and measures had been proposed to make it easier for first-time buyers to enter the housing market. The report on the inquiry had been circulated for consultation and was being considered by the Government. One of the proposals contained in a memorandum that had recently been released for public consultation was to make it mandatory, under certain conditions, for municipalities to provide rental guarantees to families with children. The proposed new rules were expected to enter into force on 1 January 2025. In the long term, the housing market was in need of reform to remedy structural problems, increase the availability of buildable land, simplify building regulations and shorten lead times in planning and construction processes.

13. Household debt had increased in recent decades. Since 2010, a cap on the loan-to-value ratio and an amortization requirement for mortgages had been introduced. A public inquiry was under way to evaluate the impact of those measures.

14. **A representative of Sweden** said that the National Board of Health and Welfare mapped homelessness on an ongoing basis. The Board regarded homeless persons to be those who lived in a situation of acute homelessness or in an institution or assisted living accommodation, long-term housing provided by the social services or short-term private housing. According to preliminary results from the most recent survey, the number of people in situations of homelessness had decreased since the previous survey in 2017. The survey had covered all Swedish nationals and legal residents over 18 years of age and minors who did not live with their parents or guardians. More men than women were in situations of acute or temporary homelessness, and at least 9,400 children were affected by homelessness, most of whom lived with their mothers in sheltered housing. Two thirds of homeless persons had been born in Sweden, an increase since 2017.

15. In 2023, the number of evictions carried out by the Enforcement Authority had increased by approximately 10 per cent compared to the previous year. Municipal social welfare committees ensured that persons living in the municipality received the support they needed, provided a range of housing solutions and conducted preventive and outreach activities. In certain cases, landlords were required to notify social services if a tenant was at risk of eviction and solutions could be sought. For instance, the social services could come to an agreement with the landlord to take over the lease and sublet the property to the tenant in question.

16. The Government had launched a national strategy to combat homelessness for the period 2022–2026. Under the strategy, the Housing First initiative – a proven method for combating homelessness among people with social problems – would be implemented nationwide. County administrative boards assisted municipal efforts to prevent evictions.

17. Private landowners and municipalities could apply to the Enforcement Agency for the removal of informal settlements that violated the landowner’s rights. The social services and municipalities must provide support to migrants in irregular situations, including nationals of other European Union countries who did not have a permit to stay in Sweden. Such support consisted of covering travel costs for migrants to return to their country of origin or providing night shelters, which were run in cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

18. Mapping by the National Board of Health and Welfare had shown that drug abuse, mental illness and the lack of a steady income were the most common causes of homelessness, and domestic violence against women was another important factor. The Government intended to pass a new law to make services more sustainable, with a focus on prevention, and the Parliament had recently passed a bill to improve protection and support for persons living in sheltered housing. The Board and municipal authorities were stepping up efforts to find permanent housing solutions for victims of domestic violence.

19. **A representative of Sweden** said that a means-tested allowance was available for low-income households, young people under 29 years of age and families with children that needed assistance with housing costs. Pensioners and recipients of sickness and activity compensation might qualify for a housing supplement. In January 2022, following an inquiry commissioned by the previous Government, measures had been proposed to better target the allocation of housing benefits. The measures were being considered by the current Government.

20. The compilation of data on ethnicity, disability or other personal characteristics was not permitted under Swedish law. However, the Government was aware that the proportion of pensioners on low incomes had remained relatively unchanged over the period 2013–2022. Single pensioners were more likely to have a low income than cohabiting pensioners, and the proportion was higher among single women than men. Nevertheless, the proportion had declined over time and the lowest percentage of pensioners on low incomes had been recorded in 2022.

21. **A representative of Sweden** said that discrimination against any person in the provision of public housing was prohibited under the Discrimination Act. The Equality Ombudsman, anti-discrimination offices and victims could bring court cases for discrimination, and the Ombudsman could take other enforcement measures. In 2020, the Government had tasked the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning with analysing and assessing the prevalence of unfavourable treatment that might constitute a

violation of the Discrimination Act in the allocation of rented housing, and the Board had concluded in its report that persons on lower incomes were at greater risk of discrimination. However, each individual case had to be considered on its merits. The Ombudsman received approximately 60 complaints related to discrimination in the housing market every year and had stepped up efforts to combat such discrimination and strengthen access to justice and compensation for victims. A growing body of case law would offer greater legal certainty in such matters.

22. **Ms. Ravenberg** (Country Task Force) said that she would be grateful for statistical data on how the proportion of persons aged between 25 and 35 years who were homeowners had changed between 2022 and 2023. She would like to know what effective measures were being taken to address regional disparities in access to health care, including in relation to the scope of services and waiting times, and to limit out-of-pocket expenses, and whether those measures had been evaluated, adapted or renewed. It would be helpful to know what the outcome had been of any evaluation of efforts to standardize cancer care under the Patient Act of 2015 and how the Delegation for Increased Accessibility in Health Care worked in practice. She was curious about the measures taken or envisaged by the authorities to ensure the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health for all persons, irrespective of their legal or health insurance status. She would also like to hear about measures to ensure the right to accessible and equitable health care and to combat stereotypical and abusive treatment and discrimination in health care. The Committee would appreciate more details on the health-care services available to asylum-seekers, given that legislation provided for emergency and time-critical health care for them. It would also be useful to understand what had been done to ensure full access to health care for asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants in all regions of Sweden. She would like to know whether the authorities had a policy to ensure uniform compliance, in all regions, with the Health and Medical Services Act, which granted undocumented migrants the right to health care. She wondered whether any evaluation had been carried out of the national mental health strategy for 2016–2020, how the strategy had worked in practice and whether it had been renewed.

23. **Ms. Lee** (Country Task Force) said that she would like to know what steps were being taken to move away from institutionalized care for older persons and adopt a model of long-term care and support in the community. She wondered whether any concrete policy recommendations had been made with regard to addressing the shortcomings of the social security system for platform workers. It would be helpful if the delegation could provide the Committee with a figure for basic unemployment benefit as a percentage of median equalized income.

24. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim** said that he wished to draw attention to the fact that, while tax revenue was an integral element of the maximum available resources of any State party, indirect taxation could erode the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living for some segments of the population.

25. **Mr. Windfuhr** said that he would appreciate clarification of whether there were standards governing temporary shelters or whether decisions relating to them were made at the municipal level. It would also be helpful to understand how long women and children could stay in such shelters. He wondered whether decisions by the social services to take over rent payments for those who could not afford them were based on specific criteria. He would also like to understand which authorities could initiate public inquiries or consultations.

The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4 p.m.

26. **A representative of Sweden** said that the overall goal of Swedish health policy was to ensure good and equitable health. The Government was currently working on encouraging meaningful leisure time in the company of others in order to promote good living conditions for children and young people. For that purpose, and to lay the foundation for good health in later life, an activity card was used to promote regular exercise and participation in cultural activities.

27. **A representative of Sweden** said that Sweden was proud of its high-quality health care. One of the priorities set out in the Government's health budget for 2024 was to address long waiting times and regional disparities in the provision of health care; to that end, there

was a need to increase health-care capacity, improve access and secure the supply of skilled workers. In Sweden, regions and municipalities were responsible for providing health care; the Government's control over their work was limited due to the constitutional principle of local self-determination. In some cases, however, the Government could take initiatives to stimulate health-care services or pay out special funds to support the work done by the regions. For example, the Government was providing a sectoral grant of SKr 3 billion to improve the ability of regions and health-care employees to provide good, safe care. It had also commissioned the National Board of Health and Welfare to develop a proposal for a national plan to reduce the shortage of hospital beds.

28. Access to health care more generally was regulated by the Health and Medical Services Act, which stipulated that the objective of the health and medical services was to provide good health care on equal terms for the entire population and respect the dignity of the individual. Access to health care must therefore be provided equally, irrespective of place of residence, age, sex, ability to take initiative, economic capacity, nationality or cultural differences. Legislation on discrimination was also applicable to the health sector.

29. Asylum-seeking and undocumented migrant children under the age of 18 years had the same right to health care as other people resident in Sweden, and it was offered to them on a subsidized basis or for free in all Swedish regions. For adults, subsidized health care, including emergency care, maternity care, abortion care and contraceptive advice, was available. Time-critical care included emergency treatment and treatment that, if postponed, would lead to a more serious condition or a need for more extensive treatment. It was up to the responsible health professional to decide, on a case-by-case basis, which treatment could not be postponed.

30. **A representative of Sweden** said that the national mental health strategy for 2016–2020 had been extended to apply for the period 2021–2023. Around €150 million had been allocated annually to its implementation. The Public Health Agency and the National Board of Health and Welfare were responsible for the evaluation of agreements between the Government and regions and, in 2023, had found that the State's efforts in the areas of mental health and suicide prevention had resulted in positive developments, including in the form of increased competence, availability of services and collaboration. There were plans to present a new mental health strategy in 2024. Other related initiatives included the allocation of SKr 3 billion to an agreement between the Government and the regions to increase access to child and adult psychiatry services. The Government had also tasked the Public Health Agency with strengthening knowledge of the health situation of the national minorities and the Sami People.

31. **A representative of Sweden** said that there were no policy recommendations on platform workers as they were covered by social insurance.

32. **A representative of Sweden** said that the basic unemployment benefit stood at SKr 11,200. Most workers were enrolled in the unemployment insurance fund which, in the case of unemployment, usually provided up to 80 per cent of their former salary, up to a ceiling amount.

33. **A representative of Sweden** said that public inquiries were set up as independent entities comprising a chair and members, normally supported by secretaries and experts. They presented comprehensive reports on new legislation or could evaluate or propose strategies, and their comments were circulated to all relevant parties. The only entity that could set up a public inquiry was the Government. The Parliament could carry out internal work similar to a public inquiry, but in practice that procedure was very rarely used.

34. **A representative of Sweden** said that social assistance was ultimately the responsibility of the municipalities. While such assistance was not linked to any specific poverty line, there was a legal requirement for recipients to be assured of a reasonable standard of living. In 2024, the indexed norm of social assistance benefits stood at SKr 5,000 for an adult without children and SKr 12,140 for a single parent with two children.

35. Emergency housing was covered by the national strategy to combat homelessness. To prevent rough sleeping, it included emergency accommodation in the form of hostels and crisis apartments, which were not equipped for long-term stays, and shelters for victims of

domestic violence. The National Board of Health and Welfare had been commissioned to assess the use of emergency accommodation to ensure that it did not become long-term or recurrent. The Parliament had passed a bill outlining requirements for shelters, including sufficient staffing levels and their suitability for children irrespective of age or sex.

36. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Government's initiatives to support care for older persons included a grant to help improve staff skills during their paid working hours; inquiries into access to high-quality health care and medical expertise, including on ways to require staff to have sufficient Swedish language skills; initiatives to decrease loneliness, including by creating spaces in which older persons could socialize; and targeted mental health services for older persons.

37. **A representative of Sweden** said that very few older persons lived in institutions in Sweden, as they tended to remain in their own private apartments with extensive home-based care.

38. **Mr. Caunhye** (Country Task Force) said that he would appreciate information on the specific measures in place to give effect to the right of all children to inclusive education, irrespective of their personal status, ethnicity or socioeconomic background; on efforts to combat segregation and discrimination in schools, particularly through the provision of specialized support to vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged students; on the steps taken in higher education institutions to address social biases and ensure equal access to higher education for all students, irrespective of their socioeconomic background; and on the concrete measures adopted to ensure equal access to inclusive education, without discrimination, for the children of undocumented migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons. Up-to-date statistics on the enrolment rates and educational outcomes for children from those groups in primary, secondary, higher and tertiary education would also be welcome.

39. The delegation might provide details of any measures taken to ensure that a proportionate number of women studied science and technology at the tertiary and higher levels of education; to guarantee that Roma children had equal access to education, without discrimination; and to address the specific challenges encountered by children with disabilities and ensure that such children had access to inclusive and high-quality education tailored to their needs. In addition, he wished to know what measures were planned to eradicate stereotypes and stop abuse and discrimination against minority students, including Jews, Muslims, people of African descent and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, within the school environment; what remedies were available to students subjected to abuse and discrimination on account of their religion, ethnicity, race, culture or gender; and whether statistics for the previous three years, disaggregated by sex, age and origin, were available on the number of students who had undergone drug testing by the police in schools and on the number who had been suspended or expelled from school for returning a positive test. A description of any measures planned to safeguard students' right to education and prevent students from being subjected to undue abuse within the school environment as a result of drug testing would also be helpful.

40. He would be interested to hear about measures to ensure that children belonging to the national minorities had access to education in their respective languages; that there were suitable textbooks, teaching materials and qualified teachers proficient in minority languages at all levels of schooling; that the Sami People were able to exercise their language rights, particularly in view of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022–2032; and that bilingual education was available in the areas inhabited by the Sami People and by members of the other national minorities. Furthermore, it would be useful to receive information on the specific steps taken to enhance the education and preserve the cultural heritage of the Sami People and the other national minorities, including their history, customs and traditions, together with a description of the results achieved in that regard.

41. He would be grateful for information on the follow-up given to the request from the Government of Mexico for 24 Indigenous objects to be returned to the Yaqui People; on the measures taken and the mechanisms in place to facilitate the repatriation of human remains and cultural objects to the Sami homeland; on efforts to empower the Sami Parliament and the Sami People to receive repatriated cultural objects and human remains.

42. He would be interested to hear about the measures taken to ensure affordable Internet access for older persons, low-income families and disadvantaged and vulnerable segments of the population, including those living in rural and remote areas, and about the impact of those measures.

The meeting was suspended at 4.35 p.m. and resumed at 4.40 p.m.

43. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Government was endeavouring to combat growing inequalities in school opportunities and outcomes, a trend attributable in part to the fact that Swedish society had become more socioeconomically segregated and that, over the previous decade, the country had welcomed a considerable number of migrants. Sweden had a decentralized school system in which most schools were public and run by local authorities. Among the initiatives undertaken to reduce inequality in education were the allocation of government grants and the assignment of highly skilled teachers to socioeconomically disadvantaged schools, including preschools. State-funded career development grants were also available for teachers at such schools. The Government had broadened participation in early childhood education and care, thereby helping to reduce the skills gaps between children from different backgrounds, and placed emphasis on the development of basic skills such as reading, writing and counting.

44. In 2022, the Government had commissioned an inquiry to enhance monitoring of the educational performance of students with disabilities. It had also taken steps to make the system of support for students with special educational needs fairer and more equal. Changes had been made to timetables for students with intellectual disabilities in compulsory education in order to better meet the students' needs and place a greater focus on knowledge acquisition. In 2023, the Government had invested heavily in increasing the number of special needs teachers, and the Parliament had approved a government proposal to strengthen support for students with neuropsychiatric disabilities. The Government had tasked the National Agency for Education and the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools with implementing the proposal.

45. The hiring of minority language teachers was a challenge, in response to which the Government had instructed the National Agency for Education to issue guidelines to schools on distance learning and had enabled the inclusion of minority language modules in all teacher training courses. It had also provided the Sami Education Board with additional funding for teaching materials. The Government shared the Committee's concern regarding the low participation rate of Roma students in minority language education.

46. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Discrimination Act explicitly prohibited discrimination at all levels of education. Accordingly, complaints of discrimination in education could be brought to court by the Equality Ombudsman, anti-discrimination officers or victims themselves. In domestic law, a distinction was drawn between discrimination, victimization and harassment. In 2022, the Ombudsman had received some 760 complaints of discrimination in education settings, roughly 100 more than in 2021. The increase could be explained in part by greater awareness of the Ombudsman's role. Both the Discrimination Act and the Education Act required education providers to take active and systematic measures to identify, prevent and respond to cases of discrimination, victimization and harassment. The remedial actions that could be taken depended on whether a case fell within the purview of the Ombudsman or of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. The Ombudsman could bring a civil court action or adopt enforcement measures, while the Inspectorate could order the education provider to take remedial action, for example by dealing with inappropriate staff behaviour or putting in place preventive measures.

47. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Government was not aware of drug testing in schools being an issue and that domestic law delivered far-reaching protections for children's rights, including their right to physical integrity.

48. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority was responsible for ensuring universal access to electronic communications in Sweden and for procuring and ensuring the operation of relay services. State funds were used to cover the cost of special support for persons with disabilities to ensure the efficient provision of electronic communications and postal services. The Authority managed Digital Help, an

online platform designed to provide tips and guidance to digital beginners, including older persons.

49. **A representative of Sweden** said that the National Minorities and Minority Languages Act had been strengthened in 2019, including through amendments requiring municipalities and regions to adopt objectives and guidelines for their minority policy work, clarifying the duty of administrative authorities to provide information and setting out what was expected from consultations with the national minorities. The amendments had also reinforced the right to receive preschool education and elderly care in the minority languages. Special rights were accorded to the use of the Finnish, Meänkieli and Sami languages when dealing with the municipal authorities in the relevant administrative areas. In 2024, the Government would provide municipal authorities with approximately SKr 30 million to fund the provision of minority language services. The County Administrative Board of Stockholm and the Sami Parliament had been tasked with monitoring the implementation of the National Minorities and Minority Languages Act and related policies and with assisting implementation efforts through awareness-raising activities, information campaigns and training programmes. In 2009, a government website had been launched to provide information on the national minorities, their rights and anti-discrimination legislation. In April 2022, approval had been given for an action plan to preserve and promote the national minority languages. The plan provided for language planning measures, the promotion of literature and reading, awareness-raising activities and additional funding for universities that taught the national minority languages and for language revitalization efforts carried out by the Institute for Language and Folklore. In addition, the National Board of Health and Welfare had been tasked with producing information on and disseminating knowledge of national minority rights and languages among decision makers and health-care, social care and elderly care professionals.

50. Sweden was fully committed to taking appropriate measures to encourage and facilitate dialogue and the building of constructive relationships between museums and Indigenous Peoples. Its position regarding the repatriation or restitution of cultural objects was that such processes should be guided entirely by expert assessments and involve legally sound, transparent and efficient procedures. Experts at Swedish museums followed international recommendations, conventions and declarations in their assessments. While there were often good reasons for repatriating cultural objects, for example if they had been stolen, decisions had to be made on a case-by-case basis and as a result of a thorough process that included dialogue with the parties concerned. Museums in Sweden were legally responsible for managing their collections and assessing requests for repatriation, including by examining how objects had come to be part of their collection. However, objects from State-owned collections could be disposed of only by a formal government decision in accordance with the Budget Act. The repatriation of Indigenous cultural objects was a priority issue for the Government. The number of repatriation requests had increased over time, a trend that was expected to continue. In 2022 and 2023, the Government had consented to the transfer of ownership of objects originating from Benin, Mexico and the Plurinational State of Bolivia. The Government had instructed the Swedish National Heritage Board to explore the legal, economic and practical prerequisites for the identification, restitution and repatriation of Sami cultural objects and human remains with a view to establishing a regulatory framework. The Board had submitted an interim report to the Ministry of Culture in late September 2023 and would present its final report by 1 April 2024.

51. **A representative of Sweden** said that, for 2024 and 2025, the Government had tasked the National Agency for Education with further developing, in cooperation with the Living History Forum, a tool for systematic work on anti-racism initiatives to bolster democracy in the school system and beyond. The Agency was also conducting a national study on antisemitism to gather the experiences and views of students and teaching staff on attitudes towards, and incidents and contemporary expressions of, antisemitism in the education system. The Government had also increased funding to the University of Gothenburg, which, through the Segerstedt Institute, disseminated knowledge among key stakeholders, including teachers, of working methods to combat antisemitism.

52. Slightly more than 50 per cent of persons aged between 25 and 35 years were homeowners.

53. **Mr. Caunhye** said that, in the light of reports that LGBTQI and Muslim students were at particular risk of harassment in the school environment, he would appreciate information on any relevant preventive and remedial measures taken by the Equality Ombudsman or other bodies. He would like to know about the number of complaints made and the outcomes of any remedial action taken. He would welcome details of any measures that had been put in place, and the outcome thereof, to ensure equal access to primary and secondary education for Roma children.

54. He wished to know more about the repatriation procedure for Sami ceremonial objects and the measures already taken or being considered to empower the Sami Parliament and the Sami People in that regard.

55. **Mr. Windfuhr** said that he would like to know whether municipalities could request financial support from the Government to give effect to the constitutional principle of local self-determination. It was unclear how the Government would manage a situation in which a municipality applied that principle in a way that affected the State party's obligations under the Covenant.

56. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim** said that he would like to know whether the State party had a forward-looking strategy that ensured respect for and promotion of international humanitarian and human rights law. He wondered whether the Covenant would prevail if the obligations set out therein conflicted with those emanating from European Union instruments, and whether, for example, precedence was given to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees over Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 (the Dublin III Regulation).

57. **Ms. Rossi** said that the Committee had received reports of human rights-related shortcomings in the State party's drug policy. She would like to know how many people had been detained and imprisoned for personal consumption of drugs or related activities; how many had been subjected to treatment to which they had not consented; and what treatment was available for drug users in Swedish prisons. She would welcome the delegation's comments on the justification for non-consensual treatment. She would appreciate information on the restrictions imposed on the use of harm reduction measures.

58. **A representative of Sweden** said that the national human rights strategy was forward-looking. A bill currently before the Parliament was aimed at ensuring full compliance with international human rights obligations by all government departments. Municipalities could impose taxes and manage their own budgets, while the responsibility to meet and enforce international human rights obligations rested with the Government.

59. The Equality Ombudsman was responsible for remedial measures concerning discrimination against LGBTIQ and Muslim school students, which fell under the Discrimination Act. Decisions that were not legally binding could be used as a basis for further discussions between the school, the Equality Ombudsman and the victim, who could seek compensation through the civil courts. Remedial measures for acts of discrimination within the scope of the Education Act were carried out by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. Both bodies could order schools to eliminate systemic discrimination or risk being fined. No data was available on the complaints made and the outcomes of remedial action taken by the Ombudsman and the Inspectorate.

60. **A representative of Sweden** said that personal consumption of drugs was a minor offence that was punishable by a fine. While the Government had no plans to revise national drug legislation, it did plan to develop the related prevention, care and treatment services. That work would be informed by the report that had been released in 2023 following an inquiry into drug-related issues. There was no evidence to suggest that individuals with a record of drugs-related criminal offences would avoid seeking relevant treatment. In fact, there had been an increase in the number of such patients, including a more than threefold increase in patients accessing opioid addiction treatment between 2006 and 2022. Work had been done to increase the availability of opioid antagonists such as naloxone, which the Government intended to make available without a prescription. Municipalities now provided needle exchange services, testing, vaccinations and substance abuse treatment to drug users, and those who were sent to prison were offered substance abuse treatment and activities aimed at preventing relapse.

61. **A representative of Sweden** said that an interim report by the Swedish National Heritage Board had identified two main obstacles to the repatriation of Sami remains and objects: insufficient financial resources among authorities on both sides – particularly in the Sami community – and the lack of a coordinator for the process. The Government would wait for the final report of the Swedish National Heritage Board before taking further action. Many of the repatriation procedures that had already taken place had been funded by the museums and universities that had housed such objects. The Government had no mandate to intervene in decisions on repatriation unless it was requested to do so. If such a request was made – a situation which had not yet arisen – the Ministry of Culture would act on the Government’s behalf.

62. The long-term strategy for Roma inclusion for 2012–2032 placed importance on the participation and influence of the Roma community. Approximately SKr 20 million had been allocated under the strategy for 2022–2024. Since 2022, the County Administrative Board in Stockholm had been responsible for distributing the relevant government grants to municipalities and overseeing the strategy’s enforcement throughout the country. The Swedish National Agency for Education and the National Board of Health and Welfare were developing a training programme on Roma language and culture for mediators in the education, social services and health-care sectors. Mediators acted as a link between individuals and the public sector; their work had already achieved positive results.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.