



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 112th session

### Summary record of the 3061st meeting\*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 16 April 2024, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Balcerzak

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

*Combined thirteenth and fourteenth periodic reports of Albania*

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\* No summary records were issued for the 3057th to 3060th meetings.

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

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

*Combined thirteenth and fourteenth periodic reports of Albania*  
([CERD/C/ALB/13-14](#); [CERD/C/ALB/Q/13-14](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Albania joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Albania**, introducing the combined thirteenth and fourteenth periodic reports of Albania ([CERD/C/ALB/13-14](#)), said that the population and housing census taken between September and November 2023 had been designed to be fully compliant with United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) recommendations and with European Union regulations. Respondents thus had been under no legal obligation to answer the three questions related to religion, mother tongue and ethnicity.
3. Training courses for police officers, magistrates and professionals in contact with victims, including victims of hate crime, and with Roma persons and Egyptians, covered topics such as hate crimes, diversity, non-discrimination and gender equality.
4. Pursuant to the Law on the Protection of National Minorities, between 2018 and 2022, nine by-laws had been drafted and adopted, and additionally, three draft decisions were still under consideration.
5. The budget of the People's Advocate had increased by 52 per cent since 2021, and that of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination by 32 per cent. Albanian institutions had fully implemented many of the recommendations issued by those offices during the reporting period; in other cases, implementation was still under way. The parliament had regularly addressed specific recommendations to the Commissioner and the People's Advocate, as well as to the Prosecutor General, regarding hate speech, hate crime, data collection and justice for victims.
6. The National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma Persons and Egyptians (2021–2025) had been adopted in 2021, and the situation of those groups had been monitored by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection through a dedicated system. The Government was committed to inclusive education and higher educational attainment for Roma persons and Egyptians, as reflected in the National Strategy on Education (2021–2026). Children from those groups attended local schools, not separate schools, and had the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue and to learn about their communities' history and culture.
7. Measures had been taken to prevent the use of hateful language and hate speech in the media, including by amending the Law on Audiovisual Media to bring it into line with European Union legislation and by inserting guidance in the Broadcasting Code for Audiovisual Media.
8. According to official statistics, there had not been many prosecutions or convictions for hate crimes. Between 2021 and 2024, the State Police had referred 32 cases of inciting hatred or strife, and 3 cases of incitement of national hatred, to a prosecutor's office.
9. Since 2021, a law on foreigners and 27 related by-laws had been adopted, and the National Migration Strategy and Action Plan (2019–2022) had been implemented. Of the 129 measures provided for in the Action Plan, 72 had been put into effect; 35 had been partially implemented and 22 had been neither implemented nor reported as implemented.
10. There were now 20 legal aid centres providing free legal aid, as compared with 7 in 2020. In addition, the Ministry of Justice provided financial support to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and legal clinics. More than 1,000 Roma persons and Egyptians had received free legal aid since 2021, and activities to raise awareness of legal aid had been organized for representatives of those groups by the Directorate of Free Legal Aid, other institutions and NGOs. Secondary free legal aid was available on request, albeit subject to a decision by a court.

11. Measures had been adopted to combat racial discrimination in the justice system, including racial profiling. New procedures and interview protocols had been introduced. Instructions had been issued by the Prosecutor General on the investigation of hate-based violence and the treatment of minors in conflict with the law. Each prosecutor's office now had a coordinator responsible for care and assistance to victims and to persons with special status, such as members of the Roma and Egyptian communities. The Government was grateful to the NGOs and other relevant institutions that cooperated in strengthening the ability of the judicial police and prosecutors to identify hate as a motive and conduct effective investigations.

12. **A representative of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination** said that the provisions of the Convention were not widely known among Albanian authorities and institutions. Even where the legislation complied with the standards of the Convention and the constitutional principle of equality and non-discrimination, it proved challenging to apply in practice, for several reasons: the failure to adopt the necessary implementing by-laws and regulations; a tendency to interpret legislation restrictively, thereby excluding people from the enjoyment of rights, particularly social rights; and inadequate financial and human resource allocation. At the local level, service provision was fragmented and uneven. With no effective means of monitoring local government activity, it was difficult to guarantee the proper implementation of legislation and standards.

13. The Albanian public authorities paid little attention to the recommendations of the national human rights institutions, namely, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and the Ombudsman, as illustrated by their failure to act on a determination issued by the Commissioner in 2015 regarding segregation in schools. That inaction had subsequently led to a case before the European Court of Human Rights, which in 2022 had found a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. Since then, despite the Commissioner reporting segregation at other schools, the authorities had continued to refuse to take action or to consider the problem at the national level.

14. Owing to a lack of cooperation and coordination between the central Government and local authorities in implementing social policies, citizens' rights could not be guaranteed, and could even be violated. In the area of housing, for example, Roma and Egyptian families in various cities had for decades been living in inappropriate conditions in former military buildings, with no essential services. Notwithstanding the issuance of a set of specific recommendations by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, the situation had not improved.

15. The continued lack of a reliable data-collection system and of disaggregated statistics that reflected social realities was an obstacle to the production of relevant and effective policies. The recent census had also been marred by a lack of transparency and timely information.

16. The Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma Persons and Egyptians had not been widely applied. The Strategy had had little impact on the daily life of members of those groups, who continued to suffer structural, systemic discrimination in the form of negative perceptions, prejudice, stereotyping and segregation. They were also victims of intersectional discrimination, as their economic status compounded the inequality they experienced.

17. **Ms. Esseneme** (Country Rapporteur) said that the Committee would welcome examples of cases in which the Convention had been directly applied by judges or invoked in court. She would like the delegation to explain the legal scope of the various decisions taken by the Council of Ministers in application of the Law on the Protection of National Minorities. What progress had been made in implementing them?

18. She would be interested to learn about the composition and powers of the High Prosecutorial Council. She would also like to know whether judges and prosecutors attended the same in-service training courses. The Committee would welcome information on the duration of the human rights training courses provided to magistrates and law enforcement officials and on the number of participants. She would like to know what measures the State party took to train judges and prosecutors, lawyers and law enforcement officers in the

provisions of the Convention and their direct application in the domestic legal order and judicial system.

19. It would be interesting to learn more about how the Government worked with the People's Advocate and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and about the obstacles preventing implementation of their recommendations. She would like to know how those two institutions analysed the situation of human rights in Albania in the reports they produced and how they had helped to improve it.

20. It would be of interest to the Committee to find out whether the State party was considering bringing article 18 of the Constitution into line with article 1 of the Convention by including all the grounds of discrimination listed in it. She would be interested to learn more about the mechanism whereby organizations with a legitimate interest could file a complaint directly with the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, what procedure the Commissioner followed in considering complaints and to what extent victims were able to participate in such procedures. The Committee would appreciate receiving examples of cases brought by the Commissioner to defend the principle of equality and non-discrimination in matters of collective interest. As to rulings that could be handed down by the Commissioner in cases concerning national minorities, she would appreciate an explanation of the concepts of "basic decision" and "denied decision".

21. In its previous concluding observations, the Committee had recommended that the State party should develop a strategy for registering births among migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in order to prevent statelessness, but the State party's report contained no information on that matter. The Committee would welcome up-to-date, disaggregated statistics on non-nationals and stateless persons living in Albania and information on measures taken or envisaged to prevent statelessness and to ensure the protection of stateless persons, particularly children, and their access to basic social services. Was the State party considering ratifying the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness?

22. The Committee would be interested to learn of any improvements in the handling of migration flows noted since the entry into force of the 2021 Law on Asylum. She wondered what conditions asylum-seekers needed to meet in order to benefit from free legal aid under that law and how long their temporary residence permits and the health-care cards were valid.

23. It would be useful to learn about the outcomes of the National Migration Strategy and Action Plan (2019–2022), particularly with regard to improvements in access to the various support services for migrants, the take-up of the voluntary repatriation procedure and the handling of migrants who were unaccompanied minors, older persons or pregnant women. How many asylum applications had been registered and, how many had been accepted?

24. Noting that Albania had signed an agreement with Italy to receive asylum-seekers and process their applications on that country's behalf, and that the reception facilities would be constructed and administered by Italy, she said that she would like to know what measures the State party would take to ensure that the migrants on its territory enjoyed all their rights, including the right to non-refoulement, under the Convention, and to ensure the implementation of the Committee's general recommendations No. 22, on article 5 of the Convention and refugees and displaced persons, and No. 30, on discrimination against non-citizens, and compliance with other relevant international instruments. What arrangements would be made to provide legal assistance to migrants at risk of automatic detention without judicial oversight? Had the courts ruled on the constitutional challenge brought by members of the opposition in respect of the agreement with Italy?

25. **Mr. Kut** (Follow-up Coordinator) said that the Committee had been expecting a report in 2019 on the State party's implementation of three of the recommendations contained in its concluding observations of 2018, but it had not received one. Moreover, the report under consideration did not provide clear information on those issues. He would therefore appreciate further details on the status of the draft secondary legislation currently under consideration to give effect to the Law on the Protection of National Minorities; on the measures taken to guarantee the full independence and impartiality of the judiciary; and on the matter of the forced eviction of members of the Roma and Egyptian minorities.

26. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he would like to know more about the outcomes of the policy of placing Roma children in local schools, and notably the results of mother-tongue teaching at such schools, and also about the dropout rate.

27. **Mr. Guan** said that he would be interested to know how the State party conducted the intercultural dialogue referred to in the Law on the Protection of National Minorities, and what results had been achieved.

28. **Ms. Tlakula** said that it would be useful to know whether the State party had consulted with NGOs in drafting the periodic report and, if so, which ones. She would also like to know what difference there was between the mandate of the People's Advocate or Ombudsman and that of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination. How was duplication avoided in the mandates of the two institutions?

29. **Mr. Amir** said that he would like to know whether there was any difference between the Roma and Egyptian minorities. It was difficult to see any improvement in their situation in eastern Europe; the Roma community seemed to be continually on the move. He wondered whether, in Albania, they lived among other communities or were isolated in ghettos. What benefit did they derive from schooling? Did they move up into secondary school? Did any Roma people hold managerial positions?

30. **A representative of Albania** said that the Ministry of Justice had official statistics on convictions and acquittals in criminal cases relating to discrimination. Offences tried since 2021 included threats with xenophobic motivation, distribution of racist and xenophobic material using information technology, violation of citizens' equality and incitement to hatred. In procedural terms, cases were brought by the plaintiff, by filing a complaint of criminal discrimination with the court. Court rulings dating from 2021 and 2022 had been implemented.

31. Prosecutors and judges received their training at the School of Magistrates. In 2023, training had been given in the principle of equality and non-discrimination and on offences of discrimination committed using information technology, cybercrime, the legal framework, genocide and asylum. A course on the institution of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination had also been given. The purpose of all such training was to ensure that courts had adequate human resources to guarantee a fair trial, in implementation of the Convention.

32. **A representative of Albania** said that the reform of the justice system had been completed. It had met all objectives and was in full compliance with the European Union framework. The High Judicial Council included members from the judiciary, the Bar and academia and represented a range of stakeholders.

33. The School of Magistrates provided mandatory initial training and also in-service training. The training programmes were devised in cooperation with the Prosecutor General's office, the High Prosecutorial Council and the High Judicial Council, and those bodies also evaluated the programmes. Between 2020 and 2023, 10 training courses specifically on hate speech and minorities had been organized, and 87 magistrates had been trained. The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination had made an outstanding contribution to the training of magistrates, judicial police officers and legal consultants offering free legal aid.

34. The Prosecutor General issued instructions each year regarding the obligation to attend training on criminal offences motivated by hatred and on other subjects such as asylum, statelessness and the treatment of unaccompanied minors and the Egyptian population.

35. The number of magistrates attending training courses was increasing, reflecting the increase in the number of relevant cases and in decisions by the Commissioner to launch proceedings. The Convention was covered in the curriculum and, as a result, judges and prosecutors had a good understanding of its provisions.

36. **A representative of Albania** said that a series of training courses had been organized for police officers by the Academy of Security, in cooperation with national partners and human rights organizations. The topics covered included prevention of discrimination within the police force, diversity, and prejudice and stereotyping in relation to the lesbian, gay,

bisexual and transgender community. At the Police Academy, 500 students had been trained on hate crime and the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual community, and awareness-raising activities had been organized for the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. Five training sessions on gender issues had been organized in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Police officers were thus well informed on the international legal framework, including the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), and on the various forms of discrimination.

37. The courses covered a range of subjects, and although there was no specific training on racial discrimination, police officers were provided with information on ethics and ways of preventing racial discrimination. In addition, the degree course for police officers covered topics such as hate crime, diversity and non-discrimination.

38. **A representative of Albania** said that the new Law on Asylum had streamlined the asylum application procedure and generally strengthened the framework for dealing with refugees. A new electronic register coordinated data available to the police, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the asylum-seekers reception centres. The Law on Asylum also provided for cooperation with international organizations, and a representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) took part in the consideration of each asylum application.

39. One result of the National Migration Strategy and Action Plan had been the development of a comprehensive institutional framework in which the Ministry of Internal Affairs worked in closer cooperation with other agencies, thereby strengthening the provision of services for migrants.

40. Temporary protection status was valid for as long as the individual remained in Albania. It conferred the right to shelter, accommodation, education and employment. Issuance of the residence permit, health-care card and travel documents were coordinated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in cooperation with the State Police, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and other relevant ministries.

41. **A representative of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination** said that the People's Advocate was a constitutional body. The scope of its mandate covered public administration only, and it issued only recommendations. The post of the Commissioner, by contrast, had not been established by the Constitution, but by a law. Its focus was the principle of equality and non-discrimination in both the private and the public spheres. While the two institutions cooperated, for example in combating hate speech, and conducted certain joint activities, there was no overlap in their mandates.

42. The law was unclear on the matter of collective lawsuits. Draft legislation to permit such action had been pending in the parliament for several years but had not been adopted.

43. The Commissioner was empowered to play certain roles in court cases and frequently referred to the Convention and the Committee's recommendations, a practice that had increased the understanding of and reference to the Convention in the courts. Thanks to an agreement between the Commissioner and the School of Magistrates, three compulsory training courses would be offered each year on non-discrimination and equality.

44. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she would appreciate it if the delegation could provide details of the rulings handed down by the courts in specific cases.

45. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that she would like to know if the State party had introduced a system of age assessment, for example to ascertain the age of unaccompanied minors. With regard to the sharing of information between the police and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, she wondered what measures were in place to prevent racial discrimination in that context and to safeguard sensitive data, such as health information.

46. **A representative of Albania** said that, under the agreement to assist Italy in managing immigration, the two facilities to be established in Albania would be under the sole jurisdiction of Italy. The Constitutional Court had determined that, since that was the case, and provided that Italy applied the Convention on the Status of Refugees and the human

rights conventions, there would be no violation of human rights by Albania. That did not mean, however, that the Albanian Government would have no responsibility to take steps to guarantee respect for human rights.

47. The delegation would forward to the Committee an excellent study carried out by independent experts detailing all court decisions in cases of discrimination. As to the procedure for producing the periodic report, an inter-institutional working group had been established in 2014, in accordance with a Prime Ministerial decision. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was required to work with various institutions, including specifically the People's Advocate and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination. No reports could be drafted without contributions from NGOs and civil society; the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other international organizations also contributed to the drafting of the State party's reports.

48. Various strategies had been adopted in relation to unaccompanied children. In the area of juvenile justice, a special reception facility was provided for unaccompanied children who were in conflict with the law, victims of crime or victims of human trafficking, following a strategy and action plan for the period 2022–2026. The authorities had an obligation to provide support for such children in one of the nine languages most commonly spoken by migrants. Every police directorate had a coordinator, and support was also provided by other agencies, including UNHCR.

49. **A representative of Albania** said that, according to the figures provided by the responsible directorate, 10 unaccompanied children had been registered in Albania in 2023, and they had since then all left the country. There were currently no unaccompanied children in Albania. A new centre for unaccompanied children was due to be completed by 2026.

50. **A representative of Albania** said that three draft laws were currently undergoing consultation in the Prime Minister's office and other ministries.

51. **A representative of Albania** said that nine by-laws had been adopted in a cooperative effort between a number of ministries.

52. **A representative of Albania** said that Roma and Egyptian children attended regular schools, where the language of instruction was Albanian. However, they had the option of learning the Romani language and the culture and history of their people as an elective subject, as the Government had over the previous two years drafted a curriculum for that subject. Schools with Greek and Macedonian as the language of instruction had been established once native-language teachers had drafted a full school curriculum. There was a small number of native-language Roma and Egyptian teachers in Albania, but not enough to develop entire school curriculums. As a result, there were no schools using their languages as the language of instruction. The dropout rate among all primary schoolchildren, including Roma children, was monitored and had decreased in recent years. The Government had in place a strategy for integrating Roma and Egyptian children into schools, which included indicators and specialized staff to track the children's progress and school enrolment rates. In addition, after-school classes were available for Roma and Egyptian children to offer additional support and help prevent drop out.

53. **A representative of Albania** said that all judges were vetted to guarantee high levels of professionalism and moral integrity and that they were all well versed in the provisions of the international conventions. By law, legal assistance was provided free of charge to stateless persons and foreign nationals. In certain cases, including those where non-nationals were victims of discrimination or domestic violence, partial or full coverage of court expenses and fees was also provided. In addition, as part of efforts to prevent statelessness, the Government, in collaboration with UNHCR, provided assistance in covering the cost of DNA testing for proof of paternity or maternity for children whose birth had not been registered in Albania.

54. **Mr. Diaby** (Country Task Force) said that the statistics provided in the periodic report on the composition of the population were not sufficiently up to date to be useful. He urged the State party to collect detailed information on the number and location of persons belonging to minorities in Albania, especially the Roma, Macedonian, Greek and Egyptian communities, about which no statistical data was yet available. In the meantime, he would

be grateful if the delegation would provide detailed information about the groups protected by the provisions of the Convention. He would also appreciate it if he could receive more details on the measures aimed at combating racial discrimination against the Roma, Egyptian, Macedonian and Greek ethnic minorities in Albania; measures taken to combat poverty among those groups; and measures envisaged to ensure their access to housing and adequate living conditions and to address harmful social attitudes towards them, including by challenging existing stereotypes and amplifying their voices. It would be useful to the Committee to hear about the State party's plans to adopt the remaining implementing legislation for the Law on the Protection of National Minorities, and also about measures taken to ensure that any decisions or initiatives in support of its implementation would be in line with European standards, and specifically the rights protected under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in relation to freedom of movement and use of language. The Committee would be interested to learn how resources were allocated for existing intersectoral plans and strategies, how efforts were made for capacity-building for the inclusion of Roma persons and how coordination was ensured between ministries and also between national and local bodies. It would also be grateful to receive detailed and up-to-date information on tangible progress made in providing support and services for Roma children in the care of the State and in implementing the recommendations made by the Ombudsman, the Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination and the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe. The delegation might also provide a detailed update on measures taken to guarantee access to clean water and sanitation for all Roma, Egyptian, Macedonian and Greek families in the State party.

55. **Ms. Tebie** said that she would be grateful if the delegation would provide an update on the State party's progress in implementing the Committee's recommendation issued in its previous concluding observations ([CERD/C/ALB/CO/9-12](#)) to strengthen the implementation of the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2016–2020 and other special measures to combat racism and racial discrimination against Roma and Egyptian persons.

56. **Mr. Amir** said that he believed that the Roma community should not be placed in the same category as the Egyptian, Macedonian and Greek ethnic minorities in Albania. The Roma people had come to Albania not for economic reasons, as other minorities likely had, but rather because they had suffered acute persecution during the Second World War. He wondered whether any memorials had been erected in the State party to recognize the great loss suffered by the Roma community at that time. He also wondered whether any member of the State party delegation was of Roma origin.

57. **Ms. Boker-Wilson** said that, in view of the World Bank's announcement in May 2022 that Albania would receive a loan and grant to improve its water supply and sanitation sector, the delegation might outline concrete actions taken by the State party to ensure that Roma and Egyptian families had access to clean water and sanitation services as part of that financing operation.

58. **A representative of Albania** said that one member of the delegation was from the Roma community and two, including herself as head of delegation, were from the Greek ethnic minority. It was a point of pride that the Greek, Macedonian, Egyptian and Roma ethnic minorities fared well in Albanian society. The rights of persons belonging to the Greek ethnic minority had been respected in recent history, and they had been able to hold high-level positions within the State administration and academia. Significant progress had also been made with respect to the Roma community.

59. **A representative of Albania** said that, speaking as person of Roma origin, he could confirm that the Government was making important strides towards promoting positive role models for the Roma community by involving its members in important State institutions. The very presence of a member of the Roma community at a meeting such as that with the Committee was meaningful. He had also worked with the European Commission, for example on efforts to recognize the Roma genocide during the Second World War. Albania had not deported any Roma or Jewish persons to any concentration camps. The country had no monuments to the suffering of the Roma people during the Second World War. However, the Government was working actively to promote activities relating to the Roma minority in the country.



60. **A representative of Albania** said that Roma and Egyptian children enjoyed a priority status for enrolment at the preschool level only. Owing to a number of factors, including a fall in the birth rate and an increase in migration, there had been a 19 per cent drop from 2016 to 2023 in the number of children attending primary school. However, the drop among Roma and Egyptian children had been only marginal. As a result, the proportion of Roma and Egyptian children in schools had grown. The Government had taken a number of measures to encourage school attendance among Roma and Egyptian children, including distributing free schoolbooks, providing free transportation to school and offering scholarships for academic and vocational secondary education. Following the ruling by the European Court of Human Rights that the Albanian Government had violated the rights of Roma and Egyptian children by segregating them at a primary school, the Government had established a working group to address the problem, for example by drafting a detailed plan of preventive measures that was currently being implemented. The plan included greater investment in school infrastructure and facilities, including paper and digital libraries. An online enrolment system would allow Roma and Egyptian pupils to choose where they wished to enrol. Prior to the establishment of that system, all pupils were obliged to enrol in the school that was geographically nearest to them, which often resulted in a higher concentration of Roma and Egyptian children at some schools, and a much lower one at others.

61. **A representative of Albania** said that the Institute of Statistics had carefully adhered to the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the European Statistics Code of Practice in preparing for the national census in 2023. In practice, that had meant preparing a specific strategy that included recruiting members of minority groups as information gatherers, as they would be more adept at gathering information among their respective groups. The Institute had organized methodology training for its staff, which had included training on interacting with census respondents. There had been some issues in the implementation of the census, but they had largely been of a technical nature and had all been resolved thanks to successful communication. By law, respondents were not obliged to declare their religion, mother tongue or ethnicity.

62. **A representative of Albania** said that, following an assessment of the implementation of the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2016–2020 carried out with civil society organizations, the Government had decided to launch a second plan for the subsequent period, to 2025. A budget had already been allocated and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection had been assigned the role of coordinator. Regarding water and sanitation measures, an important initiative had been taken to improve the relevant infrastructure. As to housing for Roma and Egyptian families, a quota of 5 per cent of social housing was to be made available for those groups. Poverty reduction was a key priority for the Government and was being addressed through a number of approaches, including a recently approved intersectoral social protection strategy that would run from 2024 to 2030.

63. **A representative of Albania** said that statistics had shown that the quota of 5 per cent of social housing allocated to Roma and Egyptian families had not only been met but exceeded. Roma and Egyptian persons were entitled under national law to a number of benefits, including housing grants and rental subsidies. Those benefits were coordinated with other support in the areas of employment, education and health care.

64. **A representative of Albania** said that the Government provided significant financial support to members of the Roma and Egyptian communities to improve their standard of living.

65. **A representative of Albania** said that the Ministry of Health and Social Protection had been coordinating data using an online system since 2016. International organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme and UNHCR had helped the Government with the challenging tasks of collecting data over a long period, training system users and maintaining the online system. The data indicated progress over time. Some 18,000 Roma and Egyptian persons had benefited from preventive health care in 2023, and the number of beneficiaries of primary health care in the Roma and Egyptian communities had been increasing.

66. **A representative of Albania** said that the inclusion of women, including Roma and Egyptian women, in the labour market was one of the objectives of the national employment strategy.

67. **A representative of Albania** said that specific efforts had been made to provide vocational training for members of the Roma and Egyptian communities. Manuals drawn up with the support of national and international organizations contained guidance on actions to be taken by persons in positions of responsibility to combat racial profiling, and guidelines had been produced taking into account the specific needs of vulnerable sectors of the population, including the Roma and Egyptian communities, stateless children and victims of trafficking in persons. The recommendations of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance had been translated into Albanian and the parliament had approved a code of conduct for its members which included provisions addressing the problem of hate speech.

68. An intersectoral strategy was in place with a chapter dedicated to victims of discrimination. It included provisions for working with other countries to reach solutions for and provide compensation to stateless persons and victims of trafficking in persons.

69. **Mr. Diaby** said that he would like to know whether the State party planned to increase the 5 per cent of social housing currently earmarked for members of the Roma and Egyptian communities. The Committee would welcome information, supplementary to that provided by the 2023 Population and Housing Census, on minorities in the country, including the Roma and Egyptian communities. He wondered what proportion of families belonging to minority groups benefited from subsidies designed to improve their living conditions. It would also be of interest to know how many persons in the country's prison population were members of the Roma and Egyptian communities.

70. **The Chair** said that he wished to know whether the Government had fully complied with the judgment handed down by the European Court of Human Rights relating to segregation in schools.

71. **Mr. Amir** said that, given his understanding that Egyptians were inhabitants of Egypt, he would like to know whether the Government of Egypt had offered any comment on the fact that Albania had a minority community referred to as Egyptians. Why was that group so named at the present time?

72. **A representative of Albania** said that the terminology used to describe the Egyptian minority community in Albania had been the subject of considerable debate. The Egyptian Embassy had for many years held the position that the members of the Egyptian community in Albania were not citizens of Egypt.

73. **A representative of Albania** said that no concrete steps had yet been taken to raise the 5 per cent quota of social housing for Roma and Egyptian families, which had been introduced in 2018. Those communities represented 0.36 and 0.5 per cent of the national population, respectively, and they could gain access to a total of six social housing programmes.

74. **A representative of Albania** said that the families of Roma and Egyptian children who had been affected by segregation at a school in Korça had received compensation in line with the judgment issued by the European Court of Human Rights in 2022. In response to that judgment, the Government had drafted an action plan in order to prevent segregation in schools. The situation was being monitored by the parliament and independent institutions.

75. **A representative of Albania** said that, in addition to the nine groups recognized as national minorities under the Law on the Protection of National Minorities, any group that fulfilled the criteria laid out by that law could request recognition as a national minority.

76. **A representative of Albania** said that three budget programmes addressing the needs of the Roma and Egyptian communities had been implemented in the areas of education and health care. They were based on measurable indicators and subject to monitoring.

77. The Government cooperated with various NGOs and conducted a number of activities to raise awareness of the Convention. With the support of the European Union, it was developing an app to promote social protection. Efforts were also being made in collaboration with international organizations to encourage intercultural dialogue, and a well-attended

seminar had been held on that subject on 8 April 2024 to foster communication with civil society institutions. A seminar to promote employment of members of the Roma and Egyptian communities had been held in 2023 with the participation of 60 women from those groups.

78. A congress of Roma women had been held in Tirana with the participation of the Government and NGOs. Initiatives relating to the challenges faced by vulnerable groups, including Roma and Egyptian women, had recently been established with the support of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

79. **A representative of Albania** said that a criteria-based model had been developed to help identify and tackle discrimination on a number of grounds. In order to help combat stereotyping and discrimination against the Roma and Egyptian communities, online reporting systems were in place, funded by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and accessible to civil society and the Government. Another such platform had been set up by the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination. At the request of the parliament, the Commissioner also prepared and reported back on an annual programme of awareness-raising activities held at educational establishments, which was designed to help improve understanding of the reasons behind discrimination and stereotyping.

80. **A representative of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination** said that the awareness-raising programme had first been rolled out at universities, and that its focus had now shifted to secondary schools, after which it would be introduced at primary schools. It had been developed in collaboration with UNICEF and included modules relating to bullying and hate speech, especially online. Training provided by the country's School of Principals helped to equip school leaders to better address bullying and discrimination in the institutions they headed.

81. **A representative of Albania** said that the Ministry of Culture was taking steps in line with current legislation and decisions handed down by the Council of Ministers to ensure the participation of members of national minorities in the country's economic, social and cultural life. Of the cultural projects to which the Ministry allocated grants, 5 per cent were dedicated to minorities. Under that policy, an Albanian-Roma dictionary was being compiled. Minorities were also able to benefit from a fund set up to support artisans. In addition, a number of multicultural festivals showcasing the traditions, cultures and histories of various national minority groups, including the Roma and Macedonian communities, were held periodically in Albania.

82. A major project was under way to compile an inventory of the country's intangible heritage. Many of the entries registered so far on the project website, which could be accessed by any individual or association, had been put forward by minority groups. The "Show your Culture" initiative gave members of minorities the opportunity to present their community's culture in video format. Lastly, the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development provided the opportunity to organize a series of activities to improve awareness of the country's cultures, particularly in schools.

83. **Mr. Amir** said that he wished to know whether the Roma community continued to live in ghettos and, if so, whether there were plans to dismantle them and improve the living conditions of their residents. He wondered how members of the Roma community obtained a national identity card and whether the name of the minority to which they belonged was indicated on the card.

84. **Mr. Diaby** said that he wished to know whether the increase seen since 2016 in the proportion of children enrolled in primary education who belonged to the Egyptian and Roma communities and other minority groups had fed through into higher levels of enrolment in secondary and higher education. He would like to know why Egyptian and Roma children were encouraged to follow vocational training schemes, whether they received the same quality of education as other children and whether mainstream education courses were also accessible to them. It would be interesting to find out how the country's national minorities were portrayed in school textbooks and how their history was represented in the history of Albania. The Committee would be interested to find out what proportion of the country's prison population were members of the Roma and Egyptian communities.

85. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she would like to know what obstacles stood in the way of implementing recommendations made by the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and the People's Advocate.

86. **A representative of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination** said that it was mandatory for the authorities to implement decisions issued by the body he represented. Where they failed to do so, the Commissioner appealed to the courts. The parliament had established a mechanism to monitor the implementation of recommendations made by independent institutions, but it applied only to central government actions, and parliamentary oversight did not extend to scrutiny of actions at the local government level. More robust mechanisms were needed in order to hold ministers directly accountable for their decisions and to obtain an explanation from the Council of Ministers when recommendations, particularly those relating to systemic and structural discrimination, were not implemented.

87. **A representative of Albania** said that the percentage of recommendations made by the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination that had been implemented had increased from 49 in 2022 to 52 in 2023. More cases were going to court, reflecting the fact that the parliament was giving greater priority to the Commissioner's recommendations. Training designed to help combat discrimination was given to magistrates and staff working in the courts and the police force. Ethnicity was not indicated on national identity cards.

88. **A representative of Albania** said that the Government was seeking to develop sustainable health-care policies and modernize the infrastructure of the health-care system as it pursued its goal of universal health coverage. Where possible, it was bringing the system into line with European Union standards. Recent policies included providing medical check-ups for the whole population and establishing mobile health units that visited urban and rural areas lacking such services and improving the access of the Roma and Egyptian communities to health-care facilities. The national health-care strategy stipulated that doctors were to provide medical services in the vicinity of those communities in order to help reduce health-care inequalities between them and the population as a whole.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*