



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 16th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 21 February 2024, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Crăciunean-Tatu

Contents

Consideration of reports (*continued*)

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

Seventh periodic report of Sweden

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.



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 (E/C.12/SWE/QPR/7; E/C.12/SWE/7)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Sweden joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Sweden**, introducing his country's seventh periodic report (E/C.12/SWE/7), said that the Government had taken office in 2022, at a time of crisis. Sweden had an open, inclusive and diverse society in which women and men were given equal opportunities to shape their lives, and human rights, democracy and the rule of law were key pillars. Combating all forms of discrimination remained one of the Government's key objectives. The Discrimination Act required all employers and education providers to take active steps to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities.
3. The Government aimed to achieve full respect for its international human rights obligations in national policy. To that end, the national human rights strategy described the need for a coherent framework to promote and protect human rights. The Swedish Institute for Human Rights, which had been founded on 1 January 2022, played a central role in the strategy's implementation.
4. The Government was determined to give effect to the rights of the five national minorities, namely the Jews, the Roma, the Sami, the Swedish Finns and the Tornedalers. Long-term results in that regard could be achieved only through close cooperation between government agencies, local councils and the national minorities themselves. The Sami were recognized as an Indigenous People with special rights. For the Government, the fight against antisemitism was a high priority.
5. A well-functioning labour market in which both Swedish and non-Swedish women and men could participate on equal terms was good for society, strengthened the economy, contributed to the goal of economic equality and led to better integration. A cornerstone of the Swedish model was a strong welfare system. The Government intended to implement a major reform of social protection benefits to enhance incentives for people to enter or return to the labour market.
6. The Government was proud of the country's well-developed, efficient and safe health-care system in which care was provided on the basis of need rather than ability to pay. As the world transitioned into a post-pandemic era, it was important for the Government to learn from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and prepare for future health crises. It worked closely with regions and municipalities to ensure equal access to health care throughout the country.
7. It was a priority for the Government to ensure that all individuals had equal access to inclusive education, irrespective of their background. Since 2021, it had undertaken several initiatives to support children and students with disabilities and the children of migrants, including a review of the subject of Swedish as a second language. Following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022, the Government had put in place measures to assist displaced Ukrainian children and students.
8. Swedish cultural policy objectives stated that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in cultural life. The Government had continued to create conditions for children and young people throughout the country to engage in diverse, high-quality cultural activities. Lastly, he wished to stress that the Government greatly appreciated the work carried out by representatives of civil society, who played a vital role in promoting equality and respect for economic, social and cultural rights.
9. **Mr. Abashidze** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would be interested to know how the national human rights strategy was being implemented, what framework was in place to reduce poverty, why the State party had no official definition of poverty, whether the low-income groups mentioned in paragraph 8 of the State party's report could be considered

to be “poor” and “vulnerable” within the meaning of target 1.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals and what steps were taken to ensure that poverty reduction measures benefited individuals not registered in the social security system, including homeless persons, asylum-seekers and migrant workers and their families. He would welcome details of how the cost-of-living system operated, what proportion of government revenue came from taxes, what the income, corporation and value-added tax rates were, what proportion of the State budget was allocated to social protection, whether welfare spending was adjusted to account for inflation, what percentage of income tax receipts was collected from the highest income decile of the population, what percentage of the population lived below the nationally defined poverty line and what the level of income inequality was according to the Palma ratio.

10. He wished to know whether the State party intended to withdraw its reservation to article 7 (d) of the Covenant and ratify the Optional Protocol, what steps had been taken to raise awareness of Covenant rights and their justiciability, particularly among judges and law enforcement officials, and whether any mechanisms had been put in place to monitor the implementation of Covenant obligations. Examples of cases in which provisions of the Covenant had been applied by or invoked before domestic courts would also be appreciated, together with further details of the Supreme Court rulings mentioned in paragraph 51 of the State party’s report.

11. The delegation might indicate whether the Swedish Institute for Human Rights was in full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), what mechanism was in place to ensure coordination between the Institute and the Equality Ombudsman and what measures the Government intended to take to strengthen the Institute, such as establishing clear rules for appointing its board of directors and providing it with the necessary financial resources. He would be grateful for information on complaints of discrimination filed with the Equality Ombudsman, including details of the nature of those complaints and the profiles of the complainants, on key recommendations made by the Ombudsman and the follow-up given to them by the authorities concerned, and on any steps taken to collect data on the incidence of discrimination in Swedish society.

12. It would be useful to know what main concerns had been identified through the consultations held between the Government and the Board of the Sami Parliament; why, given that a system of consultations was in place, a decision had been made to establish a Sami truth commission; what had become of the bill providing for compulsory consultation with the Sami Parliament on issues affecting the Sami People; what would be done to ensure the effective and efficient functioning of the parliamentary committee appointed to propose new reindeer husbandry legislation; what legislative steps had been taken in response to the Supreme Court ruling of 23 January 2020 on the restoration of Sami fishing and hunting rights; and what progress had been made in adopting the Nordic Saami Convention.

13. He would welcome a response to the request in paragraph 6 of the list of issues prior to reporting (E/C.12/SWE/QPR/7) for information on, and specific examples of, measures taken to provide victims of human rights abuses committed by business entities with effective remedies, together with a description of any legislative or policy gaps identified through court cases and of the steps taken to address them. In connection with paragraph 84 of the State party’s report, he wished to know why, for exports of defence materials that required an export licence from the Inspectorate for Strategic Products, the Export Credits Guarantee Board did not assess whether the transaction was consistent with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which appeared to provide a means of avoiding compliance with the State ownership policy. An update on the implementation of the Climate Act and on measures carried out under the 2019 Climate Policy Action Plan would also be helpful.

The meeting was suspended at 3.35 p.m. and resumed at 3.40 p.m.

14. **A representative of Sweden** said that, while the Government had analysed the possibility of acceding to the Optional Protocol, it was not convinced that an individual complaints procedure was the best way to promote economic, social and cultural rights, not least because of the difficulty of determining precisely when such rights had been infringed. Moreover, the number of complaints that the Committee had considered remained low, which

created uncertainty as to how complaints would be assessed in practice. Consequently, Sweden was not in a position to ratify the Optional Protocol.

15. State-owned enterprises were subject to the same laws and regulations as privately owned companies. In addition, they had to implement the State ownership policy and take a long-term approach to be efficient and profitable. To that end, it was essential for them to apply good corporate governance and promote long-term sustainable value creation. They had to act responsibly and work actively to follow international guidelines on environmental and climate matters, human rights, working conditions, anti-corruption measures and business ethics. They were obliged to display exemplary conduct in the area of sustainable business, including by working strategically and transparently, with a focus on cooperation, and act in a manner that inspired public confidence. Such efforts were to be steered by international guidelines, including the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. State-owned enterprises in Sweden had, for a long time, been seen as leaders in the area of sustainability.

16. In 2023, the Export Credits Guarantee Board had monitored more than 10 major projects for which it had set special conditions for responsible risk management. That same year, it had refrained from guaranteeing financing for an infrastructure project on account of a significant risk related to working conditions, including health and safety, the right to unionize and a lack of efficient grievance mechanisms, which had made it impossible to ensure the project's compliance with international standards. In 2022, the Board had refrained from guaranteeing the financing of exports for a mining project owing to the impact on sensitive natural areas and a lack of plans for managing the impact on biodiversity in accordance with international standards.

17. The second Climate Policy Action Plan under the Climate Act had been presented to the Parliament in December 2023.

18. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Government worked to ensure that all its processes, including the budget, were in line with its human rights obligations and was required to report annually to the Parliament about how those obligations were being fulfilled. A highly independent national human rights institution had been established in 2022 to effectively monitor, investigate and report on respect for and the implementation of human rights. The institution was in the process of applying for accreditation from the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

19. The Equality Ombudsman and the national human rights institution had separate mandates: the former focused on enforcing the Discrimination Act, while the latter had a broader mandate. Efforts were under way to ensure meaningful coordination between the two bodies. The Government was committed to ensuring that the Ombudsman's recommendations on legislative proposals were reflected in the relevant bills; if they were not, an explanation was provided. Most complaints brought before the Ombudsman related to working life, education and the provision of goods and services. In 2022, the largest relative increase in complaints had concerned public services. Complaints relating to health care services had decreased between 2021 and 2022 following the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

20. The Discrimination Act prohibited, inter alia, discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity; in the provision of goods and services in shops and restaurants and by public and private health-care providers; and in the provision of assistance by public officials. The Government was considering amending the Act to include actions by public officials, such as searches by police officers and customs agents.

21. **A representative of Sweden** said that the level of social assistance was calculated annually based on the consumer price index. In 2022, the number of households receiving that assistance had decreased for the seventh year running and had stood at approximately 160,000. To reduce dependence on such assistance, the Government was working towards further incentivizing individuals to enter the job market.

22. **A representative of Sweden** said that the social insurance system covered almost everyone living or working in the country and catered to different life stages and health conditions. Several social insurance benefits and allowances such as pensions, maintenance

support for older persons, sickness and activity compensation and parental, maternity and sick leave were adjusted annually on the basis of changes in the country's general price levels, known as the price-based amount. That calculation also determined the ceilings for such benefits. The different types of pensions were all calculated based on the income index. Disposable income for households was further strengthened by the fact that cash transfers were calculated based on the consumer price and income indices. Owing to a continued rise in living costs, in July 2023 the Government had increased the temporary supplementary allowance for families with children who were entitled to the housing allowance, which would be paid until the end of June 2024. Maintenance support for children aged between 7 and 10 years who were being raised by single parents had also been increased. Since 2010, social protection expenditure in relation to gross domestic product had hovered just below 30 per cent, which was similar to other Nordic countries and the European Union average.

23. National figures demonstrated a decrease in the number of households below the poverty line to just over 12 per cent. There had been a similar decrease among households with foreign-born or single parents.

24. **A representative of Sweden** said that, in an important step towards ensuring the right of the Sami People to transparency and participation in decision-making, legislation on a consultation system with the Sami People had entered into force in 2022, pursuant to which the Government and related agencies were obliged to consult the Sami Parliament or a Sami organization on issues concerning them. From 1 March 2024, the legislation would also apply more broadly to the country's municipalities and regions. Such consultations were to be recorded following a certain procedure and conducted in good faith until either an agreement was reached or the Sami representative – who could also initiate consultations – declared that such consent would not be possible. The consultations were wide-ranging and often concerned infrastructure projects affecting land used for reindeer husbandry; recent examples included the bill on elections to the Sami Parliament and the proposed climate change adaptation strategy.

25. The Truth Commission had been established in November 2021 to examine policies affecting the Sami People, raise awareness of Sami history and the effects of historical injustices on the community and propose redress and reconciliation measures. The Commission's final report was due in December 2025.

26. In January 2023, ministers and high-level Sami officials from Finland, Norway and Sweden had met in Stockholm to discuss the future of the Nordic Saami Convention. Discussions were ongoing, and, if an agreement was reached, the Convention would become one of the few cross-border instruments regarding Indigenous Peoples. The committee on reindeer husbandry was consulting with the Parliament and other interested parties until June 2024 to help shape future legislation on that issue.

27. **Ms. Saran**, welcoming the State party's high official development assistance contributions, said that she would like to know why gross national income was no longer used to calculate such contributions and whether that change would affect the predictability of assistance in the future. In the light of reports that assistance priorities had shifted from poverty alleviation to support for refugees, she wondered whether any conditions were being imposed on the provision of assistance to that group. She would be interested to hear why the State party was channelling less aid through multilateral institutions like the United Nations and opting for alternative avenues.

28. The Committee was concerned about reports of rare mineral mines and wind turbines being established in Sami territory. She would like to know whether prior informed consent had been sought in that regard and whether the potential loss of livelihood that might result had been considered.

29. She would welcome the delegation's comments on reports that the rights enshrined in the Covenant did not receive the same constitutional protection as civil and political rights. She wondered whether any measures were being taken to address discrimination against persons with disabilities, Muslims, persons of African descent and Roma, and to tackle the striking decline in gender equality, as demonstrated by income equality indices.

30. **Ms. Lee** (Country Task Force) said that she would like to know whether any measures were in place to ensure that the 2045 carbon neutrality target could be achieved without the reported short-term increase in greenhouse gas emissions. With regard to the development of the wind power and mineral extraction industries, it was unclear whether the rights of the Sami People to culture and an adequate standard of living had been considered and whether any steps had been taken to ensure that the relevant mitigation and adaptation measures respected the rights of Indigenous Peoples. She would be interested to hear whether the proposed requirement for various public sector employees to report any contact with undocumented migrants was still being considered by the Government, amid concerns that it could affect those migrants' access to education, health care, justice and protection.

31. **Mr. Windfuhr** said that he would be interested in hearing whether the Government had any opinions on, or was discussing, the proposed European Union directive on corporate sustainability due diligence and the ban on products made using forced labour. He would like to know whether any statistics were available on the incentives put in place to decrease dependence on the welfare system, what measures were planned in that regard and who they would be aimed at. It was unclear whether there was any evidence for the effectiveness of such measures.

32. **Mr. Fiorio Vaesken** said that he would appreciate further information about the methodology used for drafting the State party's reports to the Committee, the related mechanisms that were in place for consultation with civil society organizations and the process for implementing the recommendations set out in the Committee's concluding observations.

33. **A representative of Sweden** said that in 2022, the Government had launched programmes to combat antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Gypsyism, Afrophobia and racism against the Sami People. In the draft budget for 2024, the Government had proposed increased funding to tackle such issues over three years. Following an evaluation, the Government planned to discuss the long-term accuracy and value of the national plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crimes in prohibiting and actively countering such discrimination in society.

34. The Government was continuously striving to achieve gender equality. While Sweden had ranked above all other European Union member States in the 2023 Gender Equality Index, data from the Index and the European Institute for Gender Equality showed both increases and decreases in the country's relevant indicators. The national gender pay gap, which had been assessed by the Institute as standing at nearly 10 per cent, had remained stagnant since 2019, having decreased until that point. Almost half of that figure remained unexplained, a serious issue which was being examined in a public inquiry into lifelong income levels. It was hoped that the implementation of Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms would help to address the gender pay gap.

35. **A representative of Sweden** said that a public inquiry on the bill on mandatory reporting of undocumented migrants was ongoing, and the authorities were exchanging information to strengthen the enforcement of decisions to return migrants. Certain exemptions to the reporting rules were needed in order for the regulations to be legally secure and to ensure that unintended consequences did not arise. Health-care professionals would be exempt since undocumented migrants had access to subsidized maternity and other forms of care.

36. **A representative of Sweden** said that a public inquiry would examine incentives for entering the labour market, and the Government would use the input received as the basis for its decision on whether to pursue that approach. The incentives were intended to improve the integration of migrants, especially women, into the labour market and into society as a whole.

37. **A representative of Sweden** said that the land use rights of the Sami People were enshrined in law and the Constitution, and the Sami People received compensation if those rights were infringed. The Sami People were entitled to use more than half of the country's total land area for reindeer herding, whereas mining activities used only a small fraction of

land. While she was unable to comment on specific court cases, the Government was confident that the country's laws provided strong protection for herding rights. The recently enacted legislation governing consultation on issues concerning the Sami People would further safeguard those rights and would be applied to planning by regional and municipal authorities. Through its legislation, including the Planning and Building Act, the Minerals Act and the Environmental Code, the Government sought to achieve a balance between different land use interests. The issuance of mining permits was subject to appeal, and the reindeer herding communities and the Sami Parliament must be consulted before such permits were issued.

38. **A representative of Sweden** said that, given the contemporary geopolitical situation, Ukraine was currently the largest recipient of Swedish official development assistance.

39. The country's climate goals had remained unchanged. In March 2024, the Government would present the Sami Parliament with a climate change adaptation strategy, in line with European Union policy and the Paris Agreement. The Government would follow up on the Committee's recommendations in consultation with the relevant actors, including the Swedish Institute for Human Rights.

40. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Sami Parliament played a crucial role in implementing the right of the Sami People to self-determination and was the Government's key dialogue partner on issues affecting the Sami People. The main tasks of the Sami Parliament were to protect Sami culture and livelihoods and to present proposals regarding any matter of interest to the Sami People. The Sami Parliament was regulated under the Sami Parliament Act and had a central administrative agency for reindeer husbandry. It also decided on the distribution of State funds and grants from the Sami Foundation Board, appointed members of the Sami Education Board, set objectives for Sami language policy and ensured that the interests of the people were heard, particularly in relation to the needs of the reindeer industry. The Government regularly consulted the Sami Parliament and, in 2024, had increased the funding allocated to it by 10 million kronor (SKr) to a total of SKr 270 million.

41. **A representative of Sweden** said that targeted measures such as means-tested benefits were available to single-parent households. Parental benefits, together with an affordable and accessible public childcare system, allowed both parents to work and achieve an adequate work-life balance. It also contributed to the high rate of women's participation in the labour market.

42. **A representative of Sweden** said that it would not be appropriate to pre-empt the outcome of the ongoing negotiations concerning the proposed European Union directive on corporate sustainability due diligence.

43. **A representative of Sweden** said that the recommendations issued by the human rights treaty bodies were published on government websites, and all relevant actors within the Government were informed of the outcome of any follow-up thereto. A working group on human rights served as a forum for discussing the treaty bodies' comments and observations and deciding on appropriate courses of action.

44. **Ms. Lee** said that she wished to know what the impact had been of measures to promote youth employment, such as the job guarantee for young people; what specific measures had been adopted to improve access to decent employment opportunities and training for young people, especially those with low levels of education; what preventive steps had been taken to combat discrimination in employment on the grounds of ethnic origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity; and what practical remedies were available in cases of discrimination in the labour market. She would appreciate information on the procedures, burden of proof, penalties, compensation and legal aid in employment-related discrimination cases, and it would be useful to have statistics on the number of court cases that had been won by victims of such discrimination over the previous five years.

45. She would be interested to learn what specific legal measures, other than measures to address trafficking in persons, the Government had adopted to combat labour exploitation; which government agencies were mandated to implement those measures; what their impact

had been in terms of improving the substandard working conditions of migrants and asylum-seekers; and what steps had been taken to ensure that victims had access to effective remedies without fear of reprisals or other negative consequences. She wished to know what specific measures the Government had implemented to combat occupational segregation with a view to closing the gender pay gap and to facilitate reconciliation of work and family responsibilities for both men and women, and how labour protection was guaranteed for workers in the platform and gig economies. It was unclear whether labour inspections were carried out to ensure adequate working conditions in those sectors; if so, she would welcome data on such inspections. She wondered what steps had been taken to address the issue of in-work poverty, improve access to social security benefits, especially for persons in non-standard forms of employment, and to raise the minimum social security benefits and daily allowance for asylum-seekers to a level that ensured an adequate standard of living for recipients thereof.

The meeting was suspended at 5 p.m. and resumed at 5.05 p.m.

46. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Government, mindful of the economic importance of a well-functioning and inclusive labour market, had passed a labour reform law to boost full-time employment for both women and men. Sweden had the second highest employment rate in the European Union, and employment had remained high both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The long-term unemployment rate had fallen over the previous two years and had been below pre-pandemic levels since late 2023. The rate had fallen most sharply among foreign nationals who had been born outside Europe, though they still accounted for more than half of the long-term unemployed population.

47. **A representative of Sweden** said that upper secondary school education lasted three years, and the completion rate was around 80 per cent. Higher vocational training courses made it possible to combine studies with work experience and were designed and run in partnership with employers to meet their workforce needs. A small majority of higher vocational education students were women, and their median age was 30 years. Adult learning courses were available to persons who had not completed upper secondary education, and migrants were offered Swedish language courses.

48. **A representative of Sweden** said that part-time employees might qualify for supplementary social assistance from the social welfare committee and financial and practical help from the employment agency.

49. **A representative of Sweden** said that the rules for parental benefits had been amended to increase flexibility and promote gender equality. From July 2024, both parents would be able to take parental leave simultaneously and for a longer period, and benefits could be transferred to another person, such as a grandparent, who stayed at home to care for a child.

50. Social security and benefits were linked to the price index, and sickness and activity compensation had risen substantially owing to inflation. The increase would have been significantly lower if the benefits had been calculated using the average income of the total population. The Government was closely monitoring changes in the financial situation of households.

51. Preschools enabled parents to combine parenting with work or studies and supported the development and learning of children from 1 year of age. Children of parents who were unemployed or on parental leave were entitled to a minimum of three hours of preschool per day, and fees were capped to ensure that prices remained reasonable.

52. **A representative of Sweden** said that the level of compensation for holiday leave was set by collective agreements and was not regulated by law. The Government intended to reduce low-skilled labour migration into Sweden by establishing a minimum salary threshold for the issuance of work permits. In 2022, rules on labour migration had been tightened: a requirement for prospective migrants to have an employment contract had been introduced, and employers were obliged to report any deterioration in the terms of employment.

53. Regional coordinators from the social services often participated in inspections by the Swedish Work Environment Authority to identify workers who were being exploited. Victims of exploitation were entitled to 30 days' leave for recovery and to be part of the

criminal investigation into their employer. Inspectors from other authorities were trained to identify victims and report labour exploitation to the relevant authorities. The Government had assigned to the Swedish Work Environment Authority the task of coordinating the nine agencies responsible for combating fraud and other labour-related crime. The country's labour policy was founded on the sharing of responsibilities between the Government and the social partners, which went to great lengths to regulate and adapt to the new conditions in all sectors of the labour market, including the platform economy. During its presidency of the Council of the European Union, Sweden had led the negotiations on a directive to improve working conditions for platform workers, which was intended to prevent and address the incorrect classification of employment status, introduce rules on algorithms for business management and improve company transparency. Those negotiations were ongoing.

54. There were now clearer rules on the issue of low working hours, making full-time working patterns the norm, and labour laws had been adapted to meet increased needs for flexibility and security and regulate reductions to working hours.

55. The Discrimination Act prohibited discrimination, including in the workplace, on the grounds of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and age. The Equality Ombudsman was responsible for enforcing the Act by following up complaints from individuals or conducting inspections on its own initiative or on the basis of tip-offs from the public. It could dismiss cases that were unfounded or reach non-binding conclusions on the application of the Act. It could also litigate on behalf of individual complainants seeking damages and impose fines on employers found to have breached the Act.

56. Court cases on employment matters could be handled by the Labour Court or the public courts. In such disputes, the burden of proof lay with employers.

57. The number of complaints received by the Equality Ombudsman fluctuated year-on-year but was increasing overall; 922 complaints had been received in 2022. The Equality Ombudsman had shifted its focus to litigating individual cases involving discrimination. While statistics for 2023 were not yet available, the number of cases brought by the Ombudsman and the level of damages it sought had increased. The Ombudsman was very active in social dialogue, including on workplace-related issues, which it had identified as an area of concern.

58. **A representative of Sweden** said that reforms were being undertaken to speed up the asylum process and increase the daily allowance available to asylum-seekers. Asylum-seekers could apply for a special grant to meet urgent needs such as buying winter clothes, spectacles, items for children and disability equipment or covering medical, pharmaceutical and dental costs.

59. **A representative of Sweden** said that social security benefits were divided into residence-based and work-based benefits. The self-employed, employees and workers with irregular hours could obtain work-based benefits and were covered by the general scheme, provided that they met the necessary criteria.

60. **Ms. Lee** said that she wished to know how the authorities were assessing the impact of measures to promote youth employment and combat substandard working conditions for migrants and asylum-seekers. She wondered whether legal aid was provided to victims of discrimination. She was curious to hear about how the authorities were addressing the challenges faced by workers in the platform economy, who could not obtain social security insurance.

61. **Ms. Saran** said that she would like to know how the authorities ensured that seasonal workers who were not citizens of the European Union, and therefore not covered by the guidelines from the Swedish Food Retailers Federation, were protected from poor working conditions. She wondered what measures were in place to address the fact that recourse to litigation in civil courts was extremely expensive, with litigants potentially liable for paying the opposing party's expenses.

62. **Mr. Windfuhr** said that he would like to know whether there had been any discussions on the introduction of minimum wage regulations, particularly to support workers who did not belong to a trade union. Given that full-time work had become the norm

in the State party, he would like to know how persons who wished to work part-time were accommodated. The delegation might also comment further on its efforts to reduce the use of part-time fixed-term contracts. Given that older single women, persons aged under 19 years and persons born outside Sweden were more likely to experience poverty, he wondered what poverty reduction measures were in place to target those three groups.

63. **Ms. Rossi** said that she would be grateful if the delegation could explain the factors contributing to the significant poverty gap between residents born abroad and those born in Sweden, with a particular focus on whether those factors included discrimination in access to employment, goods and services on the grounds of national origin, ethnicity or race. She would also like to know whether any research had been conducted on the situation and whether there were any measures in place to bridge the gap. She would like to understand the next steps to introduce and implement the human rights-based budget initiative.

64. **A representative of Sweden** said that while full-time work had become the norm and was often necessary to provide for oneself, part-time working patterns remained possible. In 2020, the Government had launched an inquiry on labour migration, following which two reports had been published in 2021. Proposals based on the outcome of the inquiry had led to the adoption of new legislation that had entered into force in 2022 and which included a requirement for employment contracts to be sent to the Swedish Migration Agency. The Government was currently evaluating those measures. A recent public inquiry had led to proposals on requirements for work permits and heavier financial sanctions on employers who hired workers who did not have the right to reside in Sweden, with the aim of tackling substandard working conditions for migrants.

65. There was no intention to introduce legislative requirements on a minimum wage due to the consensus between the Government, labour unions and social partners that the issue should be dealt with at the grassroots level. Social partners therefore had the sole prerogative to conduct collective bargaining on wages, and the collective bargaining system was shown to provide benefits for businesses and employees and was able to respond to changes in the labour market more quickly than the legislative process could. However, legislation regulating the working environment remained applicable.

66. When the Equality Ombudsman litigated on behalf of individuals, the latter were never responsible for paying legal fees. Some civil society organizations also received government funding in order to support individuals in court cases and negotiations with employers. However, most disputes were resolved out of court, and court litigation was seen as a last resort. Individuals could also lodge small claims proceedings, which involved limits on the compensation sought and capped the potential liability for the opposing party's costs at one hour of legal fees.

67. **A representative of Sweden** said that, with regard to the poverty gap between foreign-born citizens and those born in Sweden, the social security system was designed to provide support for everyone, and there was no discrimination in access to social security services.

68. **A representative of Sweden** said that there were social security benefits targeted at certain groups. For example, the Government aimed to strengthen the economic status of pensioners. In 2022, it had raised by SKr 1,000 the guaranteed pension, which was granted to those who had earned low or no pensionable income during their life, and had increased the means-tested housing supplement for pensioners.

69. **Ms. Ravenberg** (Country Task Force) said that she wished to know whether there had been any evaluation of the measures taken to ensure adequate housing, including social housing, and if so, what the results had been and whether the Government had subsequently adopted any action plans to address the issue. She would also like to know whether there had been any evaluation of the programme aimed at making homes financially accessible through the introduction of a rent ceiling and restrictions on the income criteria imposed by landlords, and if so, what the results had been. She would be grateful for more details on the eligibility criteria for social housing, the number of social housing units provided and any measures to tackle the high debt burden of households as a result of residential mortgages. It would be helpful to understand whether the measures in place had helped to overcome the housing

shortage, including for homeless people. She would be interested to hear the results of the government-launched study on facilitating a socially sustainable housing supply.

70. She would like to know how homelessness was defined and what protections existed in Swedish legislation for persons experiencing homelessness. It would also be helpful to know whether any evidence-based research had been conducted to inform policy decisions, evaluate interventions and monitor progress to reduce homelessness and whether any measures had been adopted to tackle its root causes. She would appreciate data on homelessness, disaggregated by age, gender, migration status and residence status.

71. She would be grateful if the delegation could confirm whether the reported housing challenges faced by persons of African descent, Muslims and Roma were being addressed, what were the main obstacles faced by those groups and what measures were in place to remove those obstacles. She wished to understand what measures the authorities envisaged to ensure the right to housing and remove the impediments preventing certain groups from obtaining access to the housing market. The delegation might provide more information on the location, size and ethnic composition of the population living in informal settlements, as well as on access to basic services within those settlements. She would welcome details of the legislative measures in place to strengthen protection against forced eviction, as well as for statistics on that issue for the reporting period, including on the number of persons evicted and any alternative accommodation or compensation provided.

72. It would be helpful to receive disaggregated statistics on poverty among marginalized groups in Sweden, including foreign-born residents and asylum-seekers. She wondered whether there were any plans to increase the very low daily allowance for asylum-seekers and whether the child allowance amounts were the same for all children. Lastly, she would like to know what measures had been taken to guarantee that the Government's poverty reduction policy covered everyone, including older persons and persons not registered with the social security system.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.