



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 2013th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 18 October 2023, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Peláez Narváez

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

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention *(continued)*

Fifth periodic report of Albania ([CEDAW/C/ALB/5](#); [CEDAW/C/ALB/Q/5](#); [CEDAW/C/ALB/RQ/5](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Albania joined the meeting.*
2. **Ms. Seferi** (Albania), introducing her country's fifth periodic report ([CEDAW/C/ALB/5](#)), said that, cognizant of the Convention's importance in guiding national legislation, policies and programmes, the State party provided training on its provisions to judges, prosecutors, judicial police officers and other professionals, and also disseminated related information materials for use by civil society. The legal framework had been strengthened in order to enhance gender equality and end discrimination against women. Amendments to legislation on discrimination, for example, had prohibited hate speech, segregation and sexual harassment and placed the burden of proof on parties accused of discrimination. The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, who was responsible for monitoring the implementation of Law on Gender Equality, had handled almost 70 cases of gender-based discrimination between 2020 and 2023. In response to concerns regarding the identification and follow-up of discrimination cases involving women and girls, particularly women and girls from vulnerable groups, efforts were made to raise awareness of the problem among institutions and the general public. Free legal aid had been introduced, inter alia for victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse and trafficking in persons, minors in conflict with the law and victims of discrimination. More than 4,500 women had benefited from legal aid between 2021 and 2023 via primary legal aid service centres, legal clinics within higher education institutions and non-profit organizations.
3. The legislation on domestic violence had been amended to address the problem of discrimination when it occurred during emergencies, such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The rights of women victims of violence, sexual violence and trafficking in persons had been strengthened through amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code. Women's participation in public and political life had increased considerably thanks to amendments to the Constitution and the Electoral Code and the introduction of a 30 per cent quota for female participation at different levels of government; candidate lists that did not respect that quota were rejected. Victims and potential victims of trafficking in persons, gender-based violence and domestic violence, as well as adolescent mothers, were among the disadvantaged groups prioritized in active employment programmes. Gender-responsive budgeting had been introduced at the local level and incorporated into 45 budget programmes. The law guaranteed gender equality in the registration of property.
4. In addition to adopting legislative measures, the Government had drawn up a range of strategies and action plans to promote gender equality and combat domestic violence. In so doing it had been informed by evaluations of previous plans and strategies, as well as international instruments. An evaluation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016–2020 had revealed the need for its successor to promote gender mainstreaming and the elimination of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women. The new strategy therefore focused particularly on disadvantaged groups, such as women and girls with disabilities and older women.
5. Steps to reinforce the national mechanisms advocating for gender equality included the strengthening of the National Gender Equality Council and periodic renewal of its membership. Capacity-building had been provided to gender equality employees and local coordinators against domestic violence, and their involvement in developing gender equality projects had been enhanced. The role of women members of parliament and municipal councillors had been strengthened through alliances that facilitated cooperation and the exchange of information and best practices in order to promote and monitor gender-responsive legislation and policies. Civil society organizations played an active role in developing legislation and policy, and the Government provided funding and infrastructure for their awareness-raising activities and specialized services for vulnerable groups. The

Government also harnessed civil society's experience in protecting women and girls against violence and discrimination when it devised its own standard operating procedures.

6. Social policy prioritized the strengthening of families and women. Financial assistance for families in need had been increased by a fifth; it had doubled for families with three or more children and tripled for orphaned children and victims of domestic violence or trafficking in persons. The social and health insurance contributions of unemployed mothers of three or more children were subsidized until their children reached the age of 5; more than 8,000 women had benefited from that policy since 1 January 2023.

7. The Government took a zero-tolerance approach to violence against women and domestic violence. Its work in that area focused on adopting and implementing relevant legislation, establishing referral and case management mechanisms at the local level, providing services to victims and undertaking capacity-building activities. Awareness of those phenomena was raised through campaigns run by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection with the support of civil society and international organizations. As a result, there had been an increase in the number of criminal cases brought and protection orders granted. The Government undertook collaborative efforts to combat trafficking in persons and implemented the relevant recommendations of international organizations.

8. Women's participation in decision-making had improved considerably. Senior positions at all levels of government were held by women. The Speaker of the country's parliament and many members of the parliament, including the Deputy Prime Minister, were women. Measures had been adopted to ensure that Roma and Egyptian women and girls had access to education. Discrimination in employment and with regard to social insurance benefits was prohibited by law, and the Government had introduced a range of legal reforms, including to the Labour Code, to align legislation in that area with international standards. The new National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023–2030 aimed to provide quality employment and lifelong learning for all, while young women also benefited specifically from an action plan to implement the Youth Guarantee Programme.

9. More than 17,000 women aged between 40 and 49 had benefited from free cervical cancer screening and treatment, and more than 74,000 persons between 50 and 65 had received free mammograms since early 2020. A programme had been launched to vaccinate 15,000 girls aged 13 and over each year against the human papillomavirus. Some 40 per cent of women in the labour market worked in agriculture. Their economic and social empowerment was promoted as part of a strategy for agriculture, rural development and fisheries, and women in rural areas benefited from poverty-reduction and empowerment measures. For instance, the scoring system for allocating investment grants from an agriculture and rural development fund awarded additional points to applications submitted by women.

Articles 1–6

10. **Ms. Mikko** said that she wished to know why just 13 per cent of mayors in the State party were women, despite their strong representation at other levels of government. Given that most women in Albania were unaware of their rights, she would welcome information on the measures adopted to educate women – including young women, women in rural areas, women with disabilities and Roma and Egyptian women – on human rights in general, and on specific human rights instruments, including the Convention. She would also like to know how the State party implemented non-discrimination legislation, particularly with regard to marginalized women, and whether the women who comprised the majority of the Cabinet would ensure that the Law on Gender Equality was updated. It would be useful to have information on awareness-raising campaigns to educate legal professionals and society as a whole on the principle of non-discrimination.

11. **A representative of Albania** said that the Government had taken a series of measures to increase visibility and raise awareness of the Convention, its optional protocols and the concluding observations issued by the Committee in 2016. The Convention was covered in the curriculum in the School of Magistrates and also in the continuous training for the State police, in awareness-raising activities organized for marginalized groups and in training for practitioners in the field of gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence.

Relevant classes were also incorporated into compulsory and higher education curriculums. The Albanian parliament also played a role in promoting visibility of the Convention and had mentioned the Convention in committee hearings in which relevant State institutions, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations had participated.

12. The 2021–2030 National Strategy for Gender Equality was largely based on the Convention, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the conclusions and recommendations made by the respective committees for both instruments. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection was the main authority responsible for developing, coordinating and implementing gender equality policies. Fully costed and budgeted specific national action plans that met obligations under international treaties existed for all marginalized minority groups, including persons with disabilities, the Roma community and LGBTI persons.

13. In 2021, amendments had been made to the Law on Protection from Discrimination, which stipulated that local authorities in the exercise of their functions had an obligation to treat every person equally, to promote equality and to prevent discrimination. The law now defined further grounds on which discrimination was prohibited, including nationality, sex, age and HIV status. It further defined eight forms of discrimination, including hate speech, segregation and sexual harassment. Fines could be doubled in cases of aggravated discrimination. Work to raise awareness of the law was ongoing.

14. The new legislation on domestic violence and efforts to disseminate information on the legal protections against it and the institutions providing support to victims had improved awareness of the problem. Reporting of violence, especially domestic violence, which had previously been considered a private issue, had thus increased. Trust in institutions providing services to victims had also increased. The new law provided special protection for mothers, pregnant women and persons with disabilities. Pursuant to recommendations issued by the Committee and the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, the new law had been expanded to include provisions on violence between intimate or cohabiting partners, stalking and sexual harassment.

15. The Committee had in 2016 issued a recommendation to revise the 2008 law on gender equality, and the revision had been taken on board in the Government's current National Strategy for Gender Equality. The Government had established working groups, was drawing up amendments and was planning a broad consultation with State, human rights and civil society organizations, including through parliamentary committees, along with awareness-raising activities using social media.

16. **Ms. Mikko** said that she wished to know whether a member of the Albanian parliament was in attendance and whether figures could be provided on the increased reporting of gender-based violence. She wondered whether the delegation wished to comment on reports of a significant shortage of human and financial resources for gender equality activities in Albania.

17. **A representative of Albania** said that the number of cases of gender-based violence reported annually had risen from just over 4,600 to over 5,300 between 2019 and 2021, and the number of immediate protection orders had risen from about 2,200 in 2020 to nearly 3,300 in 2021.

18. **A representative of Albania** said that during the last parliamentary session, the parliament had had a specific subcommittee on gender equality and the prevention of violence against women, as well as a subcommittee on human rights. In every parliamentary session, the parliament's standing committees and subcommittees invited representatives of civil society organizations to appear. Based on the information they thus gathered, they subsequently invited institutions tasked with protecting women against domestic and gender-based violence.

19. In its various parliamentary oversight and monitoring activities, the parliament coordinated its work related to data collection with the Ombudsperson and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination. The work of the subcommittee for legal affairs, public administration and human rights was largely based on such data, which the subcommittee used to identify outstanding issues and to make recommendations. The same subcommittee

conducted field monitoring of the treatment of women at prisons and penitentiaries, monitored prosecutions, particularly those relating to domestic violence, and requested detailed reports on protections against gender-based violence and violence against women.

20. More than 30 per cent of the members of parliament were women. The Alliance of Women Members of Parliament carried out activities focusing on issues of gender equality and gender-based violence. A regional conference of women members of parliament had been held with representatives of the parliaments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

21. **A representative of Albania** said that the proportion of gender-responsive budgeting in the Government's midterm budget programmes had increased from 2.3 per cent for 2017–2019 to 9 per cent for 2022–2024, bringing Albania ahead of many countries in the region in that respect. The country's new budget management system allowed for more accurate calculations of gender-responsive expenditure and had revealed that 6.7 per cent of the total budget for 2020 had been spent on addressing gender inequality across all sectors. The law on local government self-financing had increased opportunities for gender-responsive budgeting at all stages of the financial planning process. The authorities had worked closely with international organizations, especially the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), to draft budgets, improve the accuracy of budget information and raise awareness of gender-responsive budgeting commitments.

22. **Ms. Seferi** (Albania) said that the Ministry of Health and Social Protection had a department for social inclusion and a unit specifically dedicated to gender equality and combating domestic violence, staffed by dedicated specialists. The country's 61 municipalities had local referral mechanisms for victims of domestic violence and also had gender officers on their staffs. However, there was room for improvement, especially in terms of increasing the number of specialists, in particular gender officers at the local level.

23. **Ms. Morsy** said that she would be grateful for information on the steps taken to strengthen the National Council on Gender Equality, which had convened only once a year in the years 2017, 2019 and 2020. She also wished to understand how the Council monitored and evaluated the impact of its policies and initiatives.

24. The Committee would appreciate clarification on the division of labour at the local level among gender equality officers, social workers and coordinators against domestic violence, and also a clarification of the roles of the focal points on gender, child protection and violence against women, whose positions were sometimes held by the same person. Were there any plans to improve such local mechanisms? She also wished to learn of any institutional links between the gender equality machinery and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

25. In light of the gender-responsive budgeting requirements under the Law on Local Self-Government Finance, could the delegation indicate the steps taken to collect disaggregated data relating to gender and sex, in order to inform the respective budgeting? What institutional partnership existed between the People's Advocate and the National Council on Gender Equality? How did Albania guarantee the rights of women and girls with disabilities, and what was the procedure to address individual complaints of discrimination?

26. **Ms. Ameline** said that, while the State party had carried out praiseworthy reforms and made substantial progress in the political sphere, the overriding objective in working against discrimination was to achieve parity. She therefore wished to know what complementary measures were envisaged to achieve that goal. The Committee would be interested to hear how ongoing reforms in the justice system were supporting gender parity in senior roles and to learn about other measures, for example in the realm of public services and police reform. She wondered whether the Government intended to expand the use of quotas, for example by extending their applicability to publicly owned businesses. Given the importance of diversity and of countering discrimination on the basis of disability and sexuality, she asked the delegation to confirm the State party's commitment to taking measures that allowed all women greater enjoyment of their rights.

27. **A representative of Albania** said that 11 municipalities had gender officers who were responsible for gender equality policies. There were also local coordinators for referral mechanisms in the 61 municipalities. Roles were sometimes assigned to the same person in smaller municipalities, as Albania was a small country with limited resources.

28. The National Council on Gender Equality had exceptionally not met its obligation to convene twice a year during the years of the COVID-19) pandemic. The Council had a prominent role in advising the Government and in discussing and approving all gender equality plans prior to their adoption by the Council of Ministers. Three members of the Council were civil society representatives; civil society organizations were considered partners for both consultation and implementation.

29. The role of the Ombudsperson, the national human rights institution, which had been given an A rating by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, had increased during the reporting period. It had opened seven regional offices, in cooperation with local administrations, and had a specific unit addressing women's rights and the violation of those rights by public institutions. It held annual open days during which information was provided on women's rights and instructions were given on procedures to follow in the event of rights violations.

30. Advances had been made in respect of local finance budget data and gender-responsive budgeting. Gender equality plans had been included in local budgets in many municipalities.

31. Albania had a high level of women's representation in decision-making and at senior levels, with over 60 per cent of ministerial positions held by women. The majority of judges in the Constitutional Court, including the Chief Justice, were also women. A series of measures, including awareness-raising and capacity-building activities, were in place to improve the inclusion of marginalized groups in decision-making and public life. Special attention was paid to the education of girls from underrepresented groups and to encouraging their engagement in public and political life. While the selection of candidates for local government positions was subject to political forces and could not be decided by the State, the membership of municipal councils included a high percentage of women, approaching parity. A new gender equality law was being drafted and would align gender quotas at 50 per cent.

32. **Ms. Seferi** (Albania) said that the Minister for Local Government would have the role of analysing and improving local structures. In the short term, there was a plan to gather information to improve reform mechanisms.

33. **Ms. Ameline** said that it was important to strengthen the evaluation role of the Central Election Commission in order to achieve true inclusion and critical mass, namely parity.

34. **Ms. Rana** said that the Committee would be interested to hear what kind of policy interventions the State party was planning to implement in order to end child marriage and forced marriage and to combat discrimination against lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons. She wondered whether such considerations would be addressed in the ongoing revision of the Criminal Code. The Committee would like to know what legal and policy measures the State party intended to take to address femicide, including the establishment of a femicide watch under the national human rights institution and the provision of adequate resources.

35. The Committee would welcome information on how the State party planned to ensure the effective implementation and monitoring of the new Transmission Code for Audiovisual Media and on its efforts to address gender stereotypes as a root cause of gender-based violence against women, including through the engagement of men and boys in actions to counter such violence.

36. She wished to learn about the State party's plans to establish fully equipped shelters in more municipalities in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and to ensure that those shelters complied with best practice standards for dealing with victims of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence. The Committee would also like to know whether the State party planned to establish more helplines for vulnerable women and girls, including in rural areas. It would be useful to receive information on how the State

party would ensure that protection orders were issued on the basis of clear procedures and were effectively monitored and enforced. Lastly, when would the next national survey of violence against women be conducted?

37. **Ms. Leinarte** said that the fact that a separate shelter had been established for lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons could be a sign of the marginalization of that group. It could constitute an obstacle to providing members of that group with assistance within the existing National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters. She would like to hear the State party's position on that matter.

38. She wondered why no victims of human trafficking had been identified among asylum-seekers, while Albania had become a transit country for refugees. It would be of interest to the Committee to hear the State party's position on the lack of interpreters and psychologists at reception centres. Their absence complicated the identification of individuals with specific needs, in particular women and girls with disabilities and unaccompanied children. It also made it difficult to refer people to appropriate referral mechanisms and to follow up on their cases in judicial proceedings.

39. The Committee would be interested to hear what measures the State party was currently taking to ensure, especially in remote and mountainous areas, that child marriage was not a disguised form of trafficking. She would also like to know how the State party was protecting women sex workers, for instance through the decriminalization of prostitution, and reducing demand for sexual services.

40. **A representative of Albania** said that the Government had developed measures to eliminate, or at least reduce, cases of child marriage. Child marriages often formed part of the traditions of minority communities, such as the Roma community. The Government was therefore working to include girls from those communities in education and to empower their parents, for example by increasing economic assistance funding, including parents in employment promotion programmes, providing them with vocational training and issuing small grants to help them establish start-up businesses.

41. **A representative of Albania** said that the Ministry of Education and Sports intended to contribute to eliminating child marriage by raising awareness of the practice and supporting school attendance by children from marginalized communities, for example by providing them with free transport to school and exempting them from paying education fees.

42. **A representative of Albania** said that attitudes towards the LGBTI community had improved significantly over the past 10 years. The annual pride parades took place without incident and awareness-raising events were increasingly well attended. The State had adopted concrete measures to support LGBTI groups within the framework of the National Action Plan for LGBTI People (2021–2027). Under the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, a working group was developing a medical protocol for the treatment of transgender persons. It had included representatives of the LGBTI community in its discussions.

43. The number of femicides was monitored and reported by the State police, included in the annual report of the National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021–2030) and published on the official website of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. The Government was also supporting the national Ombudsman in establishing an observatory to monitor cases of femicide.

44. The country had seen an improvement with regard to gender stereotypes. For example, thanks to an amendment to the Labour Code in 2015 and its dissemination by the Government, the number of new fathers taking paid paternity leave following the birth of their children was increasing every year. Awareness-raising campaigns and activities had been organized to promote positive parenting and to reduce gender stereotypes.

45. The prevalence of gender stereotypes in the media had been reduced through the latest amendment to the legislation on audiovisual media, which included provisions for the monitoring of gender-based discrimination and the broadening of the mandate of the Audiovisual Media Authority. The Government had included independent human rights institutions in discussions on those amendments. Albania had also ratified the International Labour Organization Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190).

46. **A representative of Albania** said that a comprehensive review of the Criminal Code was currently being conducted by a team of national and international experts. The Government aimed to complete the review and propose amendments by the end of 2024.

47. **A representative of Albania** said that the proposed changes to the Criminal Code in relation to trafficking would give victims greater legal protection and enhance sentencing and punishment for traffickers. A 2018 Decision of the Council of Ministers had obligated certain structures, such as border authorities, to identify and refer cases of trafficking to the proper authorities. Training sessions, meetings and discussion forums had been organized to provide the relevant actors with information on how to identify cases of trafficking within the country or at the border, particularly of unaccompanied children, asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants. One trafficking victim had been subjected to forced marriage, but no cases of trafficking involving child marriage had been detected.

48. An amendment to the Criminal Code allowed adult victims of sexual trafficking to be exempted from any penalties for the provision of sexual services if it could be verified that they had been done so under coercion. All children in such situations were exempted from punishment, since they were considered too young to give consent. The Government aimed to discourage demand for sexual services by organizing meetings with key actors across the country and with students to inform them about the prevention of exploitation, including forced sexual exploitation and prostitution. It also provided capacity-development training to front-line professionals. The Government was in the process of signing a memorandum of understanding with the State Labour Inspectorate and the General Tax Directorate to cooperate and coordinate with them on actions to prevent sexual exploitation within informal businesses, nightclubs and massage centres.

49. **Ms. Seferi** (Albania) said that there was one national shelter and three shelters run by NGOs, which had been supported for over 10 years by the State Social Fund. A 24-hour helpline for women and girls was also financed by the Social Fund. The shelter that received people from the LGBTI community had been funded by the State for three years. The Social Fund had been increased by 50 per cent and was dedicated to the provision of social services, including those for victims of violence and trafficking.

Articles 7–9

50. **Ms. Ameline** said that she would like to receive information on the pilot scheme to combat the low percentage of mothers elected to local government. She wondered how effective the Central Election Commission's recommendations to prevent hate speech during political elections had been. Did the recommendations need to be supplemented by a system of penalties?

51. The Committee would be interested to hear how the State party intended to use legislation and advocacy within political parties to address the role of stereotypes in instigating political gender-based violence. It would be useful to know whether the Government intended to strengthen mechanisms to encourage gender parity and to raise awareness of its importance, and how civil society would be involved and incentivized to strive for the same goal. How would the State be held accountable for implementing such measures? It would also be of interest to the Committee to learn whether the State party could commit to increasing its efforts to protect the rights of women in the diplomatic field.

52. **Mr. Safarov** said that he wished to know whether amendments would be made to the law on social programmes for housing in urban areas to benefit refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection, with a view to preventing discriminatory practices against long-term residents with limited socioeconomic opportunities. He would also like to find out whether amendments would be made to the law on citizenship to allow for more flexible naturalization of refugees with long-term residence in Albania.

53. The Committee would like to hear how the State party planned to resolve the problem of the identification of stateless persons; what the main training programmes to improve the identification and registration of stateless persons were, particularly with regard to women and girls; how free legal, health, education and other services would be ensured for stateless persons; and how the national legislation on the effective identification of stateless persons and its implementation in practice would be improved.

54. **A representative of Albania** said that the findings of a report on violence against women in political parties had been discussed in the parliament with the stakeholders responsible for policy on women's rights and gender equality. Measures were planned to amend the law on audiovisual media to establish responsibility for monitoring of the media, and specifically to ensure adequate airtime for women candidates during election campaigns and respect for gender equality in the media. The authority responsible for monitoring the media would also be given greater responsibility for monitoring violence in audiovisual media and for penalizing private media institutions that permitted discriminatory language or hate speech against women in their broadcasting.

55. The National Strategy for Gender Equality included measures to raise awareness of women's participation in public and political life. Campaigns that included men and boys in efforts to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence had been led by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, in cooperation with other organizations and State bodies. A memorandum of understanding on the prevention of domestic violence had been signed by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection with representatives of the five largest religious organizations in the country. Under the memorandum, religious organizations disseminated messages to their communities about women's rights and the prevention of discrimination.

56. At the international level, the second national action plan on the women and peace and security agenda, which would soon be adopted, included measures to strengthen women's representation in the armed forces and the Albanian State Police, including in positions of leadership. The most recent diplomatic appointments had increased the number of women ambassadors representing Albania around the world, while the incoming head of the Permanent Mission of Albania to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva was a woman with expertise in the protection of the rights of women and children.

57. **A representative of Albania** said that political parties had to comply with the quota for women candidates in local and general elections. While there were still gender stereotypes in the country, communication campaigns to promote women's participation in political life were held throughout the year, and specifically during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, in November and December.

58. **A representative of Albania** said that the law on asylum had been reviewed in 2021 and the authority responsible for handling the cases of asylum-seekers and refugees had been established as a unit within the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. On entry into the national territory, at a border post or police station, persons seeking international protection filled out a form that was accompanied by their photograph and fingerprints. The form was forwarded to the unit within 72 hours for immediate review of the relevant facts, circumstances and documents. Temporary protection could be granted for a period of one year, with the possibility of extension up to a maximum of three years. In order to leave the country, Afghan and Ukrainian citizens who had registered for temporary protection had to file a request with the responsible unit for the conclusion of their protection. Cooperation with international organizations ensured access to translation and interpretation for refugees and asylum-seekers. The Law on Foreigners also addressed the topic of statelessness and provided for pre-screening at the border and the welcome centre for asylum-seekers that was run by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

59. **A representative of Albania** said that out of 49 heads of mission working for the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 17 were women. Almost one-quarter of career diplomats at the Ministry were women and almost half of aides at the Ministry were women.

60. **A representative of Albania** said that the Law on Social Housing established access to special housing programmes for certain vulnerable groups, which included victims of trafficking or domestic violence. Since 2015, the national housing entity had entered into an agreement to ensure that victims of domestic violence paid lower rents when reintegrating into society following a period of residence at a shelter. Investment in new housing was made according to agreements with municipal authorities, and such housing could be sold to the municipalities for use as social housing. Under the Law on Foreigners, foreign women who

were victims of domestic violence in Albania benefited from all the protections set out in the law for citizens who were in the same situation.

61. **A representative of Albania** said that an instruction on statelessness approved in 2023 provided that children at risk of statelessness were automatically granted Albanian citizenship.

62. **Ms. Ameline** said that she wished to draw attention to the efforts of the European Union to counter cyberbullying and cybercrime in the political arena. The feminist diplomacy approach in foreign affairs presented a means for the State party to contribute to women's access to decision-making in its development policy.

63. **Ms. Mikko** said that she wished to know, given that women comprised the majority of members of the Cabinet, whether the adoption of feminist diplomacy had been discussed there.

64. **Ms. Manalo** said that she would appreciate information on how many women were in high-level positions in the armed forces and the ratio of women to men in those high-level positions.

65. **Mr. Safarov** said that he wished to receive information on the registration of stateless persons in 2022 and 2023.

66. **A representative of Albania** said that primary health-care services were provided free of charge.

67. **A representative of Albania** said that the National Cybersecurity Strategy was focused on the protection of citizens against all forms of cyberattacks, including bullying. The Strategy for the Investigation of Cybercrime was implemented by the Albanian State Police, and a directorate for the investigation of cybercrime had been established in 2023. The identification and referral of victims of cybercrime had been reviewed along with the assistance made available to them, and steps had been taken to ensure that a proper case file could be assembled for cybercrimes in order to refer victims to the General Prosecutor's Office. The Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Sports, had approved a safety package for schools that involved age-appropriate discussions of Internet safety and the prevention of cybercrimes.

68. **A representative of Albania** said that the National Cybersecurity Strategy included activities in schools to develop digital competence. Information on problems that children encountered online was disseminated and teachers received training to educate children on cybercrime. In 2018, safety officers had been introduced in schools. The school safety officer cooperated with the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Education and Sports to prevent violence, drug use and trafficking in persons.

69. **A representative of Albania** said that the Alliance of Women Members of Parliament played an active role in improving the legal framework on issues relating to gender equality, including domestic violence. The Alliance had held regional conferences to strengthen the involvement of women members of parliament in the legislative process, which had resulted in joint declarations of commitment to take a more active role in political decision-making, particularly to ensure gender equality and to increase the number of women in parliament. The Alliance, civil society and a committee on electoral reform worked to remove barriers to women's participation in politics and in government.

70. **A representative of Albania** said that the representation of women in the Albanian State Police had increased between 2018 and 2020. There had been a small increase in the number of women members of the armed forces – to approximately 14 per cent – between 2019 and 2020, alongside a small increase in the number of women involved in military missions abroad. The deputy head of the armed forces was a woman, and the second national action plan on the women and peace and security agenda included measures on women's empowerment.

Articles 10–14

71. **Ms. Manalo** said that she would appreciate information on the measures taken to provide girls in rural areas with access to primary and secondary education, given that,

according to the Albanian Institute of Statistics, women in rural areas who had received less than nine years of schooling experienced the highest rate of unemployment. Information would also be appreciated on the measures taken to ensure that rural women were included in vocational training, particularly in agricultural and livestock activities, in order to increase their access to markets. It would be helpful to learn of the State party's plans to increase access to education in science, technology, engineering and maths, in particular for girls.

72. **Ms. Haidar** said that, while she recognized that legislative measures had been taken to improve employment standards, compliance with the law had reportedly remained an issue, while engagement in unpaid work and in domestic work was the biggest issue faced by women in the State party. She would like to receive information on the achievements of the National Skills and Employment Strategy, how its effectiveness was assessed and whether gender-disaggregated data on progress was collected; the measures that the State party was taking to reduce the unemployment rate among women, address occupational segregation and close the gender pay gap, especially to benefit rural women; the efforts made to raise awareness among female workers of their rights under the Labour Code; and how the Government intended to improve health and safety inspections, ensure that female workers received copies of their employment contracts, were paid in full and received annual and maternity leave and benefited from redress for violations of their rights.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.