



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 3122nd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 4 December 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Balcerzak

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

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

Combined twenty-third and twenty-fourth periodic reports of Greece (continued)
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1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Greece joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Diaby** (Country Rapporteur) said that he wished to know what steps the State party was taking to improve conditions in camps for refugees and asylum-seekers, given reports that nearly one fifth of refugee camp residents did not receive basic material assistance; that there was a shortage of doctors, psychologists, midwives, nurses and interpreters in the camp system; and that asylum-seekers' access to food and medical and mental health services had been restricted. He wondered what measures were in place to ensure that ill-treatment of foreign nationals who had been detained ceased, that all allegations of such treatment were effectively investigated, that such persons were not subjected to informal punishment and that they were detained in accordance with the immigration legislation, and only as a last resort.
3. He was keen to know how the State party ensured that all detained foreign nationals had access to qualified interpretation services and that they were not asked to sign documents that were in a language that they did not understand. He wondered whether the State party would consider establishing a system of lawyers on call to provide detainees with legal assistance and allowing detainees to have at least regular access to their own mobile telephones. The State party might provide the Committee with details of steps it was taking to improve detention conditions at police stations and special temporary detention centres in order to reduce underreporting of persons suffering from multiple discrimination, and in particular from racial discrimination.
4. He wondered what steps were taken to help recognized refugees to gain access to documentation and to ensure that undocumented refugees could exercise their rights and enjoy a decent standard of living. It would be useful to know what had been done to preserve the principle of non-refoulement and to prevent cases of refoulement on racist or xenophobic grounds. He wondered whether there were any cases in which Greek courts had applied judgments in a discriminatory manner to migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees or stateless persons. He noted that nursery and primary schools had been converted into standard schools in order to prevent discrimination and inequality throughout the country. The Committee would be interested to find out whether refugee and migrant children were permitted to attend those schools.
5. It would be helpful to hear more about efforts made by the State party to ensure that timely, independent, in-depth and systematic inquiries were conducted into alleged violations of human rights by border agents and to prevent such practices. He was keen to hear what steps had been taken to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers were received, integrated and employed in a manner that excluded racial discrimination in all its forms and that all public authorities complied with that practice and adopted positive measures to facilitate the social and economic inclusion of refugees.
6. He wondered whether an impartial, in-depth, effective and systematic inquiry had been opened into reports – that were backed by strong evidence – that serious violations of human rights had been committed between 2020 and 2023 by nationals of third countries who were acting as State agents or in collaboration with them. Such violations had reportedly occurred at the land and sea borders between Greece and Türkiye and had affected more than 40,000 people. They had included the summary forced return of persons without any assessment of their needs; the excessive use of force; cruel and degrading treatment; secret detention in official and unofficial places without procedural safeguards and in the absence of minimal legal safeguards; confiscation or unlawful destruction of personal effects, including identification documents; and intrusive searches. Summary forced returns at sea had been carried out using dangerous tactics. For example, vessels had been diverted using large waves and had been left adrift without fuel.

7. Greece was not a party to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. A presidential decree to be issued in accordance with Law No. 4375/2016 would set forth procedures for determining whether persons were stateless, but it had not yet been promulgated. It was therefore not possible for persons to be formally recognized as stateless and to enjoy the rights enshrined in the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. He wondered what steps the State party planned to take to address that issue, especially for persons who were not otherwise able to obtain international protection or Greek nationality. Once asylum-seekers had been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection, their eligibility to be provided with food reportedly ended before they were permitted to leave reception centres. The Committee would like to know how the Government planned to address that problem.

8. It would be useful to know what action the State party intended to take to improve, monitor and follow up on employment conditions for migrant workers. He wondered whether there was a safe and accessible way for migrant workers to file complaints, for instance for the non-payment of salaries or for substandard working conditions. He would welcome information about the situation of undocumented migrants, who were in a vulnerable situation and might be subject to trafficking or forced labour.

9. **A representative of Greece** said that in recent years, the Training Institute of the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government had delivered a series of seminars pertaining to human rights and diversity, including a seminar on the development of intercultural skills and diversity that had been conducted 80 times and reached more than 1,600 participants. Such initiatives – to which more than 2,700 training hours had been devoted – had helped public administration bodies to respect diversity and actively promote equal treatment in their daily operations. Some 160 integrity advisors had been trained and certified; they provided support and advice on discrimination and other matters of ethics and integrity.

10. **A representative of Greece** said that the national judicial training institute provided initial and in-service training to judges and prosecutors. Initial training covered topics such as human rights, family law, gender-based and domestic violence and the treatment of victims. In 2023, 13 seminars had been held online and in person for judges and 3 had been held for court staff. In 2024, a total of 15 seminars were to be held online and in person for judges, and 12 would be held for court staff. Local bar associations offered optional in-service training in similar fields for lawyers.

11. **A representative of Greece** said that court decisions did not make direct reference to the Convention. Following its ratification, the Convention had been incorporated directly into Greek law with the adoption of Law No. 927/1979, Law No. 4443/2016 and relevant articles of the Criminal Code.

12. **A representative of Greece** said that, under the labour dispute resolution procedure, administrative sanctions could be imposed if violations of the labour law were detected, and the relevant public prosecutor was informed if a criminal offence had been committed. In complaints of discrimination, the burden of proof was placed on the employer.

13. **A representative of Greece** said that, between 2019 and 2022, seminars on antisemitism and the Holocaust had been co-organized by the authorities and the Jewish Museum of Greece and had been held with the participation of the Greek security forces. Between 2015 and 2022, various seminars had been conducted to educate prison officers about the basic principles of Islam. A teacher training programme on inclusive education had been developed in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund and was aimed at supporting teachers and education executives in promoting the inclusion and empowerment of students from refugee or migrant backgrounds and at fostering a culture of inclusion across all schools.

14. The right of refugee children to education was protected regardless of their residence status. Such children could attend schools without needing full documentation and needed none to attend specialized reception classes in which they received intensive Greek language support. They could also enrol in an optional programme that introduced them to additional subjects. Reception units for refugee education operated after school hours and focused on language, integration and psychosocial support, while refugee education coordinators

assisted parents with the registration process and acted as a liaison between families and schools. Educational guides that helped refugee students to feel welcomed and safe were available in many languages. Telephone assistance with school enrolment procedures was provided with the assistance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Ministry of Education designed and implemented programmes targeted at addressing the educational needs of refugee students. Such programmes focused on inclusion and access to education.

15. **A representative of Greece** said that Greece continued to face challenges presented by the ingress of third country nationals making their way into Europe through Türkiye. The adoption of Law No. 4932/2022, which provided for the reception and international protection of third country nationals and stateless persons, had helped to speed up the asylum application process and to safeguard and strengthen the rights of asylum-seekers. In recent years, the Asylum Service had made significant efforts to manage the backlog of pending asylum cases and to speed up the application process, for example through digitalization. A new, user-friendly integrated information system had been introduced to provide applicants with provisional insurance, healthcare and tax identification numbers. A new registration system which facilitated access to asylum had been introduced in 2022, and an online platform had been set up for booking registration appointments. Applications for asylum were assessed individually on the merits, taking into consideration the personal circumstances of the applicants and whether the outcome would lead to their refoulement.

16. **A representative of Greece** said that one of the main priorities of Greek migration and asylum policy had been to create safe and decent reception conditions for asylum-seekers. Both foreign nationals and stateless persons seeking asylum had access to housing, medical treatment, psychological support, financial aid and interpretation services, and they could, if necessary, be transported to asylum offices or hospitals. Medical, legal and psychological care that took the best interests of the child into consideration was provided to accompanied and unaccompanied minors. All reception centres had a medical and psychological support unit, and case managers assessed all new residents upon arrival to identify and make provision for any special needs that they had. Since July 2024, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and partners had conducted the Ippokratis I project to provide for the medical, psychological and other immediate needs of persons arriving at such centres.

17. Where interpretation services were unavailable at centres, information could be communicated by means of alternative solutions. Remote interpretation was provided with the help of the European Union Agency for Asylum, and the Hellenic Red Cross and other NGOs also provided such services.

18. **A representative of Greece** said that the HELIOS Junior programme had been launched to help unaccompanied minors who had reached adulthood to find a place in the labour market. The Promotion of the Integration of the Refugee Population into the Labour Market programme had been launched by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in collaboration with IOM in 2022. It offered refugees language and intercultural training, job counselling, vocational training, internships and certification of professional skills.

19. **A representative of Greece** said that, under an amendment to migration legislation adopted in December 2023, undocumented migrants were permitted under certain conditions to obtain a three-year residence permit and access to formal employment. The Government was working to improve the implementation of a bilateral agreement on migration and mobility with Egypt under which Egyptian citizens could obtain temporary employment in the agricultural sector. A memorandum of understanding had been signed with Bangladesh to address the issue of Bangladeshi workers who were in an irregular situation in Greece and to create a legal pathway for Bangladeshi citizens who wished to work in the country.

20. **A representative of Greece** said that agreements with countries such as Bangladesh and India were important, as they reinforced legal pathways for migration. The Greek asylum system was now one of the largest in the European Union. Marked progress had been made. While previously applications took years, they were now usually processed in less than 100 days.

21. **A representative of Greece** said that the new naturalization system had been the subject of a joint assessment conducted with the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in December 2022. Those involved in the exercise had concluded that the new system was fairer and easier to navigate for refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons. Only 16 of the 85 cases of statelessness or undetermined citizenship that had been identified remained pending. The applicants had obtained Greek citizenship in nearly all the other cases; in just three cases the naturalization requirements had not yet been met.

22. **A representative of Greece** said that the Hellenic Police had circulated clear guidance for protecting the fundamental rights and dignity of all migrants and refugees arriving in Greece, including their right to non-refoulement. In full compliance with domestic and international law, especially the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and relevant European Union directives, no foreign nationals who applied for international protection were returned until their applications had been processed.

23. **Mr. Diaby** said that he would appreciate a response to the concerns raised regarding insufficient medical staffing levels, excessive use of force and incidents of violence in refugee camps and reception centres. He noted that, despite commendable efforts to address statelessness, the State party still lacked a formal identification mechanism. He wondered whether it planned to ratify the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. With racist incidents in sport continuing, such as the abuse directed at the French midfielder Abou Ba during a match at Larissa in 2020, he suggested that it might be advisable to adopt legislation to address and prevent such abuse.

24. **Ms. Shepherd** said that she would like to hear about the impact of the various strategies implemented to address discrimination through human rights education. Had there been any reduction in racist discrimination, especially against migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and minorities, as a result, and had interethnic relations improved?

25. **Ms. Tlakula** said that, despite a careful reading of the extensive information on migration flows contained in the State party's periodic report, she had not found adequate responses to the Committee's earlier requests for information on the measures taken to improve: age assessment procedures for migrants claiming to be minors; access to the Greek islands and to basic services and asylum procedures there; and the conditions under which migrants were transferred from the islands to the mainland. Statistics were also lacking on the number of migrant children in Greece; the number of non-citizen children who had been enrolled in education over the past four years, including information on their age, country of origin and gender; and the number of children on the islands. The Committee would appreciate an indication of the average length of time taken to process asylum claims.

26. **Mr. Guissé**, recalling the inhumane conditions denounced by Jean Ziegler in his 2020 account of the situation of migrants in Lesbos, said that he wished to know what was being done to improve the still unsatisfactory conditions there. He asked what was being done at the legislative and policy levels to combat hate speech targeting migrants and minorities and the emergence of far-right populist parties that sought to undermine democracy and national unity, and what progress had been achieved as a result.

27. **A representative of Greece** said that his Government was very proud of the progress made in addressing the situation on the Greek islands. Further improvements were needed, but conditions had improved vastly since 2016.

28. **A representative of Greece** said that all operations at sea borders were carried out in full compliance with international law. Allegations of pushbacks and mistreatment were thoroughly investigated by the Hellenic Coast Guard and independent authorities, including the Ombudsman's Office and the National Transparency Authority. The Coast Guard had issued special instructions to all port authorities, providing guidance for conducting physical searches and managing vulnerable groups with respect for human rights. Since 2015, the Coast Guard had saved over 250,000 lives during search and rescue operations at sea.

29. **A representative of Greece** said that the training provided in the academies of the Hellenic Coast Guard included courses on human rights and discrimination. Since 2013, under a cooperation agreement with the UNHCR country office, all officers of the Coast Guard had received training on mixed migratory flows and the basic principles of human rights protection.

30. **A representative of Greece** said that efforts to improve the situation of migrants and prevent incidents of mistreatment had been intensified in recent years, yielding marked improvements that had been acknowledged by UNHCR.

31. **A representative of Greece** said that efforts to combat trafficking in persons had been stepped up at both the legislative and institutional levels. Amendments to the Greek Criminal Code introduced in July 2019 and November 2021 had significantly enhanced the legislative framework. Under the oversight of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a new mechanism for the identification and referral of presumed victims had become operational in January 2019. A national emergency response mechanism had been established under the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection to help to prevent children and unaccompanied minors from falling victim to trafficking. The National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons was being updated to incorporate a focus on the financial aspects of the crime and on trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation. In 2023, around 130 victims of such exploitation had been identified either working in or transiting through Greece. To combat such trafficking, the Greek authorities worked closely with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and, to address the financial aspects, with the Hellenic Financial Intelligence Unit and the Bank of Greece. The same high level of protection and support, which included accommodation, medical care, psychological support, material assistance and legal representation, was extended to all victims, without discrimination. A leaflet designed to raise awareness of trafficking in persons had been distributed in 12 languages, including Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Farsi, Ukrainian and Urdu.

32. **A representative of Greece** said that health and safety requirements for the accommodation of seasonal workers from outside Europe had been issued in August 2024. Ratification of the Protocol of 2014 to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) was a priority for the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and was expected to be completed in the near future. To ensure access to healthcare, social security registration numbers were provided for all beneficiaries of international protection upon submission of a certificate of employment, an employment contract, a certificate of profession or a certificate of studies in Greece. A ministerial resolution that would simplify procedures for foreign nationals and eliminate disparities was currently in the drafting stages.

33. **A representative of Greece** said that the Ministry of Citizen Protection formulated an operational plan for the prevention of labour exploitation every year, with input from the Hellenic Police. Preventive inspections were conducted twice a year in critical geographical areas and economic sectors such as agriculture, hospitality and construction, where victims of trafficking in persons were most likely to be identified. Inspections might also be conducted on receipt of specific complaints, which could be submitted anonymously online, by telephone or in person at the offices of the Labour Inspectorate, or in response to information received from the Hellenic Police, trade unions or anti-trafficking organizations. In 2023, the Labour Inspectorate had begun leveraging new business intelligence technologies and data from the official employment register, including data attesting to the presence of foreign nationals in the workforce, to enhance the effectiveness of inspections. All labour inspectors were trained to use the indicators of trafficking in persons recognized by ILO to identify victims and had a good knowledge of English. Where irregularities such as the illegal employment of foreign nationals or the employment of minors were detected, administrative penalties were imposed and/or legal proceedings initiated.

34. Employees could obtain information about their labour rights by visiting one of the dedicated information offices available in every district, by phone or by email. Relevant information had been translated into English, Bengali, Bulgarian, Romanian, Ukrainian and Urdu. As a further awareness-raising effort, the Labour Inspectorate had posted the short film *City of Ghosts*, produced by A21, an anti-trafficking organization, on the Inspectorate's official website.

35. **A representative of Greece** said that there were currently around 851,000 registered foreign nationals in Greece, including citizens of the European Union, and that the migration and asylum services had registered around 130,000 minors.

36. **A representative of Greece** said that the authorities worked with IOM on an ongoing basis to ensure sufficient medical staffing levels at migration facilities but that, as the facilities tended to be removed from urban areas, recruitment was a challenge.

37. **Ms. McDougall** said that she wished to express her concern about the situation of human rights defenders working to address trafficking and migration issues. Panayote Dimitras, a lawyer highly regarded in the global human rights community, had been persecuted in connection with his work on behalf of migrants, had had his assets frozen and was facing criminal charges. She would welcome the delegation's comments on that case and on other similar cases in which human rights defenders were facing charges linked to the very crimes that they were working to combat.

38. **A representative of Greece** said that the Greek justice system was completely independent and that human rights defenders were neither better nor worse protected than any other Greek or non-Greek citizen. The executive branch had no involvement in decisions as to the people brought before the courts.

39. **A representative of Greece** said that the delegation was unable to comment on legal cases until a final court decision had been issued.

40. **A representative of Greece** said that Greece had ratified the Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events. The law recently adopted in line with that instrument prohibited the display of banners or other materials with abusive, racist or sexist content in sports facilities. Violators were subject to a fine of €20,000.

41. As at October 2024, over 16,200 refugees were enrolled in education, over 15,600 of them as active students. Of those, more than 8,600 were boys; 7,000 were in primary school, over 4,300 in lower secondary and over 1,700 in upper secondary school; around 1,300 were enrolled in vocational upper secondary education. Seventy different countries of origin were represented, the principal ones being Egypt, Afghanistan, India, Ukraine and the Syrian Arab Republic.

42. **A representative of Greece** said that the age-assessment procedure was a well-established, three-stage process. The current lack of medical staff on the islands concerned was a problem but, in collaboration with IOM, arrangements had been made to bring in new staff, which would significantly improve the procedures. At every facility there were expert case managers who monitored the procedure, with specialist training in the best interests of the child. With the forthcoming application of the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum, the age-assessment procedure would be harmonized in all European Union member States.

43. **A representative of Greece** said that measures were in place to provide a safe, decent environment for persons in detention, taking account of the particular needs of vulnerable social groups. Special guidelines were in place addressing the needs of transgender persons. Violence of any kind against detainees was prohibited, and criminal and administrative proceedings were subject to strict time frames. Prisoners were to be fully informed of their rights, while foreign nationals were to be afforded all possible assistance in obtaining legal advice, communicating with their consular authorities and contacting their relatives. Interpretation was available where necessary. High priority was given to protecting detainees' health in the event of transfer and to providing medical care and ensuring appropriate health and safety conditions.

44. **A representative of Greece** said that under Greek law, stateless individuals could obtain Greek citizenship regardless of ethnicity, race, gender or any other characteristic. In addition, whereas nationality was normally determined in accordance with the principle of *jus sanguinis*, in the case of children who for some reason were born without citizenship, *jus soli* was applied. As Greek nationals, they had access to all benefits and services.

45. **Ms. Tebie** (Country Task Force) said that she would like to know why the Muslim communities on the islands of Rhodes and Kos were not formally recognized as minorities, while the Muslim community of Thrace was. The latter was still the only minority recognized by the State party, notwithstanding the findings in several cases brought before United Nations treaty bodies and European courts. She wished to know what steps the State party

had taken to comply with the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights and the Committee's own recommendations in that regard. Were any statistics available on the denial of recognition of ethnic differences or minority status? Was the national legislation subject to review?

46. She would like to know how well represented the Muslim minority of Thrace was in public and political life, particularly in the civil service, elected office and senior administrative and judicial posts.

47. Noting that ethnicity was not recorded as part of the personal information taken down at the time of a suspect's arrest, she said that the Committee would like to know what justification there was for the mention of Rom identity in official police reports on organized crime.

48. The Committee would like to know whether any evaluation of the National Strategy and Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma (2012–2020) had been carried out and what the outcomes of the Strategy had been. She would be interested to hear how the Government intended to remedy the reported lack of comprehensive and effective programmes under the latest strategy, covering the period from 2021 to 2030, and about the principal achievements of that strategy to date. The Committee would like to know whether there were channels of communication and consultation between State institutions and organizations representing minorities, particularly those representing Roma people, and whether consultations were held on public policies affecting minorities.

49. Roma people reportedly continued to be victims of discrimination and violence in the exercise of their economic, social and cultural rights, with many living below the poverty line and struggling to access basic social services. She would like to know what measures had been taken to ensure Roma children's equal access to education as a pathway to social inclusion and to improve Roma people's access to paid employment, for example through special training and education programmes, to enable them to enter the workforce. She wondered how the State party intended to improve teacher training in order to guarantee inclusive education that took due account of pupils' cultural needs and how it addressed the limitations on access to technology and the technological divide affecting children and adolescents, particularly those living in rural areas. The Committee would also appreciate receiving disaggregated statistics on the employment situation in the Roma community.

50. She would be interested to know what was being done to ensure that quality healthcare was accessible to members of the Roma community, particularly in light of the disproportionate impact on that group of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and what special training was envisaged for health workers in order to avoid stigmatization of Roma persons and members of other national minorities, particularly in rural areas. In light of reports that the majority of Roma people lacked access to infrastructure, including drinking water, electricity and sanitation, she wished to know whether any strategies or programmes were in place to ensure that they enjoyed decent living conditions and were not subject to forced eviction or to fines for illegal construction. She would appreciate information on any action taken to address allegations of political violence against members of the Roma community in recent years and the low rates of registration of complaints filed by them.

51. It would be useful to know about measures to be taken to facilitate access by Roma people to civil registration, with a view to speeding up their acquisition of Greek nationality, and to ensure registration of their children, who were often born outside the health system, in order to protect them from statelessness. How were unregistered children integrated into the education system?

52. Notwithstanding the adoption of legislation to protect members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community from discrimination, and of the National Strategy for the Equality of LGBTIQI+ Persons, members of that group, including schoolchildren, continued to be subjected to intolerant and discriminatory attitudes and behaviour. She would like to know what supplementary measures had been put in place to ensure that the law was enforced, to train teachers to tackle intolerance and to raise awareness among the population at large. Could the delegation provide any information on the impact the National Strategy had so far had?

53. The Committee had received reports that women pregnant with intersex children were encouraged by their doctors and their husbands to have an abortion and that health personnel and schoolteachers were generally intolerant of intersex children. She would like to know how the authorities planned to put a stop to such abortions and prevent such intolerance and discrimination.

54. The Committee had been informed of cases of violence against migrant women. The Hellenic Coast Guard had allegedly been involved in beatings and sexual assaults on women, including pregnant women, while women asylum-seekers had reportedly suffered violence and bodily injury at the hands of health workers in hospitals. Greece was reportedly seeing the steepest rise in the number of femicides in Europe. She wondered whether the delegation could provide statistics on the current rate of femicide in Greece, disaggregated by victims' ethnic and national origin. How did the State party address the root causes of sexist violence? Had it taken any steps to define femicide as a distinct crime in law?

55. The State party's report made no reference to people of African descent, which led her to wonder what the true situation was and whether the delegation could provide up-to-date statistics on that community and its participation in public life. The Committee would welcome information on activities organized by the Government in the context of the International Decade for People of African Descent and on any strategic guidelines that had been drawn up to address the situation of that community. What measures were in place to tackle the multiple discrimination suffered by persons of African descent?

56. She would like to know whether the State party had set up a formal mechanism to assess its implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and what outcomes had been achieved.

57. **A representative of Greece** said that all jointly funded programmes and actions on inclusion, differentiated instruction and other relevant areas in the field of human rights education were subject to evaluation in order to assess their value and determine what adjustments might be needed. The evaluation was also required to ensure the appropriate European Union funding.

58. **A representative of Greece** said that the term "minority" had a much narrower scope of application in Greece than it had in the Convention and other international instruments, where it denoted a population group with certain distinguishing characteristics that was numerically smaller than the majority. The Muslims of Thrace constituted a specific group with a minority status formally recognized under the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Other persons were free to exercise their right to self-identification as members of groups that were not formally recognized as minorities, including Muslims on the islands of Rhodes and Kos, who were not covered by the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne. Such persons enjoyed in practice all the rights guaranteed under international treaties, including the Convention.

59. The European Court of Human Rights had never ruled on the existence of national minorities in Greece, as it had determined that it had no jurisdiction to do so. The Court had issued three rulings on the right of association. The State had appealed, to no avail, and an independent commission had accordingly been set up to propose to the Government ways and means of implementing the Court's rulings.

60. The Roma community, while recognized as a group in a vulnerable situation warranting the authorities' special attention, was not considered an ethnic minority, in accordance with a wish expressed by the members of the Roma community themselves in the 1990s.

61. **A representative of Greece** said that Greek citizens of the Muslim faith were represented in the Parliament, where four members were Muslims, and in local authorities, where more than 100 elected representatives were Muslims. Two deputy governors in the East Macedonia region were Muslims.

62. There were currently no cases of Greek Roma persons lacking the proper documentation from the registry offices. All children born to Greek Roma families acquired citizenship in the same way as children born to other Greek parents. In acknowledgement of the fact that the Roma community was a social group of particular interest and in a vulnerable situation, a simplified registration procedure had been introduced for its members.

63. **A representative of Greece** said that the Coast Guard had no record of any allegations of sexual assault against pregnant women and had received no such information from the relevant judicial authorities.

64. **A representative of Greece** said that the previous National Strategy and Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma had been assessed in collaboration with the University of West Attica. The evaluation had indicated that the main institutional interventions on Roma inclusion had taken the form, on the one hand, of general schemes targeting all vulnerable groups and, on the other, of specific action on early school dropout, health and housing. The evaluation had brought to light certain shortcomings, such as poor coordination between ministries and stakeholders and the lack of a system of indicators and data collection to facilitate monitoring. The current Strategy had been designed taking account of those deficiencies, among other things establishing an operational mechanism to improve coordination and synergies between the various stakeholders. Overall policy coordination was the responsibility of a governmental committee; measures at the administrative level were supervised by an advisory committee, and there was a municipalities committee at the local level. In addition, Roma representative bodies participated in the Roma Forum, which was the main consultation body under the strategy. The Forum was an independent body and had so far been joined by 13 such organizations, which set their own agenda and invited other stakeholders to exchange views and make proposals to the Government. All those bodies met regularly to set the priorities for Roma social inclusion.

65. The current Strategy was already in effect. Its evaluation, to be carried out by an objective external evaluator, was being financed with European Union funding.

66. Comprehensive measures to address Roma issues had indeed been put in place, under a holistic approach based on integrated local action plans developed by municipalities with Roma populations, with government assistance. The General Secretariat for Social Solidarity required the action plans to include targeted measures, budgets and timelines in the areas of employment, health, education and housing, in order to enable the municipalities to apply for funding from the European Social Fund. Local action plans had been put in place by 85 of the 145 municipalities concerned and were under evaluation.

67. In the area of health, the members of the Roma community were vaccinated under the general health programme of the Ministry of Health. Consideration was currently being given to creating a health mediator to help Roma people in hospitals.

68. Poverty rates among Roma communities were relatively high. Roma persons were eligible for all the welfare benefits made available by the State and were informed of their rights in that regard by the local authorities. They were also entitled to receive the guaranteed minimum income, which was granted to around 500,000 people in the country. The Government's aim was to reduce dependency on benefits by promoting access to education and employment.

69. Aside from general programmes for promoting access to employment, the Public Employment Service implemented a number of programmes specifically for Roma communities, including one that allocated up to €15,000 to Roma persons aged between 20 and 44 years who wished to start a business. A total of 100 Roma persons had already benefited from the programme. A programme funded by the Recovery and Resilience Facility of the European Commission facilitated access to training and certification for Roma persons who wished to find employment in a technical field. The programme had been developed in collaboration with representatives of Roma communities, who had provided information on the types of training desired.

70. **A representative of Greece** said that there had been 12 victims of femicide in 2024. The Government took a multidimensional approach to tackling femicide. It had adopted the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and was making efforts to collect data through the Observatory for Gender Equality. Activities were carried out in schools to combat gender stereotypes, and campaigns to raise awareness of gender-based violence were conducted for children and the general public. On 25 November 2024, the Government had published the fifth annual report on violence against women, which was widely disseminated around the country. A large network of agencies provided support to women victims of violence, irrespective of their

ethnicity or social status. The Government had set up helplines for women victims and cooperated with hotel owners to provide emergency accommodation for them. The staff of shelters helped undocumented refugee women to register with the authorities.

71. The National Strategy for the Equality of LGBTQI+ Persons focused on tackling gender stereotypes and discrimination against all LGBTQ persons and was based around four main pillars: combating discrimination, ensuring safety, removing societal barriers and promoting global equality. The recommendations set out in the Strategy were incorporated into the national action plans of the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs. The implementation of the recommendations was overseen by the General Secretariat for Coordination, which meant that all government ministries were involved in implementing them.

72. **Ms. McDougall** said that it was still not clear what measures were taken to promote access to education for Roma children.

73. **A representative of Greece** said that ensuring equal opportunities for all students was a central focus of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The regulations on school enrolment and attendance applied equally to all children. The Government took specific measures to promote access to education for children belonging to vulnerable groups, including Roma children. For example, specialist staff worked with schools to implement support programmes to keep vulnerable children in school and provide them with psychosocial support.

74. Roma children did not face any administrative barriers to school enrolment.

75. The establishment of educational priority zones strengthened the participation and attainment of students who lacked the required level of proficiency in the Greek language, contributing to their successful integration. At all levels of the education system, programmes could be implemented to improve learning outcomes, combat school dropout and foster respect and inclusion. Specific programmes to combat early school dropout among Roma students were covered in teacher training curricula.

76. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, in collaboration with mobile network providers, had facilitated access to digital education for vulnerable children and families, providing them with free access to the Internet through landlines, mobile phones and tablets. The Ministry had also issued guidelines on the provision of distance learning to students with special educational needs, Roma students and refugee students.

77. **Ms. Tebie** said that she wished to know how many Roma persons lived in Greece and what proportion of the Roma population received social assistance. It was still not clear why the Government included references to the Roma identity in police reports on organized crime. She would welcome information on the root causes of femicide and statistics on the victims, broken down by ethnic affiliation and national origin.

78. **Ms. McDougall** said that she wished to know why Roma children were frequently placed in separate schools or in separate classrooms within mainstream schools. She wondered what proportion of Roma children were educated in mainstream classrooms, what proportion attended secondary school and what proportion graduated from secondary school.

79. **Ms. Tlakula** said that she would welcome information on any investigations conducted into labour discrimination and the exploitation of migrant workers and persons belonging to ethnic minorities, including information on proceedings brought against perpetrators and the compensation awarded to victims. The State party's report did not contain certain information requested by the Committee following its previous review of a State party periodic report (CERD/C/GRC/CO/20-22, para. 25 (b)). In view of that situation, she would be grateful to receive information, including statistical data, on sanctions handed down to employers who imposed abusive labour conditions or realized acts of racial discrimination; administrative procedures launched and criminal cases investigated and prosecuted for discrimination, abusive labour conditions and trafficking in migrants and/or ethnic minorities; labour inspections and any related violations identified and penalties handed down; and training provided to labour inspectors to enable them to identify victims of trafficking in persons, and the expected outcome of that training.

80. **Ms. Shepherd** said that she wished to know whether visits to the country's historical monuments and sites formed part of the Government's educational curricula, especially for the teaching of history.

81. **Mr. Guissé**, noting the delegation's reference to the Treaty of Lausanne, said that it was not clear whether that Treaty was actually relevant to the issue of racial discrimination, given that it was a peace treaty signed by Greece and Türkiye. He wondered whether the State party would consider ratifying more relevant treaties, such as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

82. **Ms. Tebie** said that it was still not clear whether the State party had established femicide as a separate criminal offence or whether any steps had been taken to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

83. **A representative of Greece** said that Greece was home to a vibrant community of people of African descent, many of whom had arrived in the country over the past two or three decades. People of African descent played leading roles in organizations such as the Migrant Integration Council and the Greek Forum of Migrants, the chair of which was also a member of the National Council against Racism and Intolerance.

84. **A representative of Greece** said that the Government fully supported the proposal to proclaim a second international decade for people of African descent and was committed to undertaking activities within the framework of a second decade to enhance the visibility of people of African descent and cooperate with them.

85. **A representative of Greece** said that, according to a national mapping exercise carried out in 2021, the Roma population of Greece stood at 120,000. Of those people, 20,000 received the guaranteed minimum income every month. There were no segregated schools in Greece, but some schools had many Roma pupils as they were close to Roma settlements or areas where many Roma people lived. In order to reduce school dropout rates, eligibility for welfare benefits had been made dependent on school attendance. According to the Ministry of Education, the number of Roma pupils in compulsory education had increased from 15,000 in 2022 to 19,000 in 2024.

86. In order to improve the conditions in Roma settlements, the Ministry of the Interior took steps to temporarily relocate settlements or enhance their infrastructure at the request of the local authorities. Currently, two relocation procedures were under way, and funding had been approved for the improvement of infrastructure in seven municipalities.

87. **A representative of Greece** said that labour inspections were regularly conducted in recent years, and that sanctions had been handed down in 736 cases and fines amounting to over €3.6 million had been imposed. A total of 82 cases concerned third country nationals with illegal residence status, who had been employed by 53 companies. A total of 20 cases involving potential victims of human trafficking had been reported to the public prosecutor.

88. In August 2024, the Government had issued a decision establishing the health and safety standards applicable to accommodation for foreign seasonal workers, the bodies responsible for examining the suitability of accommodation and the procedure for carrying out checks and imposing sanctions. Labour inspectors had been instructed to take into consideration the standards set out in the decision as a means of identifying situations where labour exploitation might be taking place or where foreign nationals might be working in abusive conditions.

89. **A representative of Greece** said that the judgment in the case of *Chowdury and others v. Greece*, known as the Manolada case, had been implemented. Its execution had been examined, and since then, effective measures had been taken to tackle trafficking in persons, particularly for the purposes of labour exploitation. Responsibility for labour inspections had been transferred to an independent authority, and the staff of the authority had been strengthened. The current workforce comprised 758 employees, and a further 139 would be recruited, which would bring the total number of staff close to the target figure established by law.

90. All staff of the Labour Inspectorate participated in specialized training seminars on preventing and combating trafficking in persons, protecting victims and developing intercultural skills, among other areas. The Labour Inspectorate had signed a memorandum of cooperation with the non-profit civil society organization A21 Campaign, which specialized in supporting victims of trafficking in persons. Seven joint training seminars had been conducted in 2023 and 2024 to foster collaboration between the police and the units of the Labour Inspectorate. All the inspectors participating in the seminars learned how to identify possible victims of trafficking in persons and how to cooperate with prosecution services. Inspectors were issued with guidelines on drafting inspection reports, and protocols for submitting reports to prosecution services had been drawn up.

91. **A representative of Greece** said that the purpose of the Treaty of Lausanne had been to establish permanent peace between Greece and Türkiye. The Treaty established the rights of the Greek Orthodox minority in Istanbul and the Muslim minority in Thrace, as well as the status of those communities and measures to protect them.

92. **A representative of Greece** said that, in 1947, the General Assembly had commissioned a study on the validity of treaties on minority rights established under the aegis of the League of Nations. The study had concluded that the Treaty of Lausanne was one of two treaties on minority rights that had remained in force after the Second World War, which showed its historical relevance.

93. **A representative of Greece** said that 21 persons had been accused of labour trafficking in 7 cases. Of 151 convicted traffickers, 15 had been convicted for labour trafficking.

94. **A representative of Greece** said that measures had recently been taken to regularize the migration status of more than 30,000 undocumented workers, including a large number of agricultural workers.

95. **A representative of Greece** said that he wished to thank the Chair and the rest of the Committee for the very constructive dialogue.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.