



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 2463rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 11 August 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Calí Tzay (Vice-Chair)
later: Ms. Crickley (Chair)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

In the absence of Ms. Crickley, Mr. Cali Tzay, Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

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

Combined eighteenth to twenty-second periodic reports of Lebanon (continued)
(CERD/C/LBN/18-22; CERD/C/LBN/Q/18-22)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Lebanon took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Assaker** (Lebanon), referring to political denominationalism, said that the Lebanese political authorities were currently engaged in a national dialogue on the National Reconciliation Document with a view to improving the formula for achieving coexistence. Lebanon was in fact already recognized as a model of coexistence. It strongly opposed racial discrimination and what was denoted as the clash of civilizations in different parts of the world. Coexistence was based on the 1989 Charter of National Reconciliation, which provided for the distribution of political authority among the components of Lebanese society. Political denominationalism was viewed as a means of ensuring the fair and equal distribution of power among communities and of consolidating internal stability and national unity. Lebanon constituted a model of national harmony in a regional environment whose social fabric was being torn apart.
3. Lebanese pluralism was currently grappling with an existential threat stemming from the serious demographic imbalance engendered by the Syrian refugee crisis of the past five years. The United Nations Secretary-General had described it as a solidarity crisis, since the international community had proved unable to address the unprecedented challenges. The major victims were, of course, Syrian civilians and neighbouring countries which hosted the huge influx of refugees.
4. The people of Lebanon were sharing water, electricity, health care, education and social services with the Syrians despite the limited resources available. Lebanon had never closed its borders to persons at risk of persecution although it was not a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. It was currently hosting about 600,000 Syrian refugees. Women and children accounted for 73 per cent of the total and minors under 18 years of age accounted for 52 per cent. The number of Syrian children enrolled in Lebanese public schools (roughly 200,000) exceeded the number of Lebanese children (roughly 175,000).
5. The direct and indirect losses incurred by the Lebanese economy had been estimated at US\$ 13 billion. The unemployment rate had risen and investment indicators had declined. Repeated terrorist attacks on the borders and within the country had seriously challenged the security forces. The Government had therefore decided in late 2014 to regulate the entry of Syrians into Lebanon with a view to preventing the collapse of the host country. Syrians were not prohibited from entering Lebanon. They were admitted if they sought temporary residence in accordance with the existing legislation. However, if they sought permanent residence as refugees or immigrants, each case was studied separately and an appropriate decision was taken. For instance, unaccompanied children, older persons and persons with special needs were granted unhindered access to the country and a similar approach was adopted in urgent humanitarian cases. The Lebanese Government also respected the principle of non-refoulement and it was not erecting walls or barbed-wire fences.
6. Syrians who were illegally present in Lebanese territory could seek to regularize their situation through the local authorities. Their ability to pay the regularization fee could be reviewed by the authorities and its payment could be waived under certain circumstances.

The Syrian migrants were distributed among 1,700 villages, municipalities and towns. There were actually more Syrian than Lebanese residents in some areas. As the local authorities were required to take protective action on behalf of all residents, a small number of municipalities had adopted exceptional measures, including overnight curfews. Such measures were usually taken in response to requests from the local community and were not welcomed by the Lebanese Government.

7. The limited material and human resources available to the municipalities to deal with the migrant crisis posed complex problems and called for solidarity and burden-sharing on the part of the international community with Lebanon at a time when terrorism lurked at its borders. The situation could not be improved by pointing the finger of blame at a State or people that bore a heavy burden.

8. Lebanon accorded a wide margin of liberty to civil society organizations, and the Government and law enforcement authorities greatly appreciated their support in addressing the Syrian crisis and its humanitarian consequences. However, the organizations should promote closer coordination among themselves and with the Lebanese Government in order to implement the Humanitarian Response Plan developed by the Lebanese Government in cooperation with the United Nations.

9. **Mr. Al-Ayi** (Lebanon) said that the special status assigned to Palestinian refugees meant that they were not covered by the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, according to article 1.D of that Convention. As a result, they did not benefit from the services of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in particular with respect to resettlement in the host State or a third country. However, General Assembly resolution 194 of 1948 granted Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes and to receive compensation. Israel had refused to implement the resolution.

10. Until such time as a just and comprehensive settlement was achieved and Palestinian refugees were able to exercise their right of return, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) remained the body with core responsibility for their welfare. However, the international community had failed to provide it with the minimum financial resources it required for that purpose. The current annual UNRWA deficit exceeded US\$ 100 million. He asked how Lebanon, with its limited resources, was expected to bridge the gap.

11. The allegation that Lebanese policies towards Palestinian refugees were discriminatory was unfounded. Lebanon had opened its borders to more than 100,000 refugees following the 1948 catastrophe (the *Nakba*). It had never occurred to the Lebanese decision makers and legislators that the crisis would persist for seven decades. Lebanon had gained its independence only two years previously and the international instruments and regulations governing refugees did not exist at the time. The series of Israeli assaults and the Lebanese civil war, in which the Palestinians were also involved, had prevented Lebanese lawmakers from comprehensively addressing the Palestinian refugee issue. The lack of a comprehensive legal framework denied them the legal personality corresponding to their status under international and domestic law. They could thus be characterized as foreigners, Arab nationals or stateless persons.

12. The Lebanese Government had established the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee in 2005 to address issues relating to Palestinian refugees. Successive ministerial statements had highlighted the need to improve the refugees' living conditions and to step up diplomatic efforts to support Palestinian rights, particularly the right of return.

13. A total of 460,000 Palestinian refugees had been registered with UNRWA in late 2015. The administrative files of the Lebanese Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities contained data on more than 592,000 refugees. However, the most recent estimates by the American University of Beirut indicated that there were about 280,000 Palestinian refugees

living in Lebanon. In addition, UNRWA calculated that more than 42,000 Palestinians had fled to Lebanon from Syria.

14. As acquisition of Lebanese nationality would deprive Palestinians of the right of return and would also have an adverse impact on demographic balance, it was rejected by both Palestinians and Lebanese. Lebanon strongly supported the refugees' acquisition of Palestinian nationality, particularly since Palestine had been recognized as a non-member observer State at the United Nations. They were both refugees and nationals of an occupied country. Lebanon had opened an embassy for Palestine in 2011.

15. Provision of education for Palestinian refugees was one of UNRWA's main tasks and more than half of its budget was devoted to its education programme. However, Palestinians who lived at some distance from UNRWA schools could attend Lebanese public schools without discrimination. The figures were shown in paragraph 64 of the periodic report. The number of Palestinian students attending Lebanese public universities ranged from 2,000 to 2,500 students each year.

16. UNRWA was also responsible for health care for Palestinian refugees. The Lebanese Ministry of Health facilitated the conclusion of contracts with public hospitals guaranteeing preferential conditions. The Ministry of Health provided coverage for some cases that were not covered by UNRWA, such as dialysis and free vaccination campaigns.

17. With regard to housing and property ownership, major problems had arisen following the adoption of Act No. 296 of 2001, which introduced new regulations linking Palestinian ownership with issues of great sensitivity in the Lebanese political and national context. According to the Ministry of Finance, the property of deceased Palestinian refugees was automatically transferred to heirs registered with the Directorate of Real Estate.

18. The Lebanese Government, in partnership with UNRWA, had launched an initiative aimed at improving living conditions in the Palestinian camps. Projects costing more than US\$ 80 million had been implemented to date. Most camps were located on government-owned land which had been placed at the disposal of UNRWA.

19. With regard to Palestinian refugees' right to practice liberal professions, the law authorized trade unions to organize the occupations and professions for which they were responsible. The State therefore played no role in enabling refugees to join the relevant trade unions. Trade union decisions in that regard might depend on labour-market requirements. For instance, the nurses' union had recently permitted Palestinian refugees to register as members. The Government was committed to improving the situation of Palestinian refugees, while preserving the country's major interests and supporting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to return and to seek redress.

20. **Mr. Karam** (Lebanon) said that the acquisition of Lebanese nationality was regulated by Decision No. 15 of 1925, pursuant to which children acquired their nationality solely from their father. That approach constituted discrimination. Two bills had been submitted to the Lebanese Parliament in 2009 aimed at achieving full equality between men and women with respect to the attribution of nationality through filiation. A bill submitted in 2010 had proposed that Palestinians should be issued with green cards guaranteeing all rights except the right to vote and the right to acquire Lebanese nationality. A bill on nationality had been submitted by the Minister of the Interior and Municipalities in 2011 and a bill had also been submitted by the National Commission for Lebanese Women but they had not yet been adopted. A Ministerial Committee had been established to study the legislation and a number of interim measures had been adopted. Discretionary residence permits could be granted to the foreign husband of a Lebanese woman after one year of marriage and to the couple's adult or minor children. In 2011 the Minister of Labour had approved the principle of free access to all occupations and professions for foreigners

married to Lebanese women. In June 2010 the Lebanese Court of Appeal had unfortunately denied the Lebanese widow of a foreign citizen the right to obtain Lebanese citizenship for her children. Civil society organizations had launched numerous campaigns in support of the principle of equal attribution of nationality through filiation since 2002.

21. Three bills aimed at the adoption of a gender quota for political participation had been submitted to Parliament. One provided for a 10 per cent quota, the second provided for an increase in the number of seats in the Chamber of Deputies occupied by women, and the third provided for a 25 per cent quota. Act No. 293 on the protection of women and other family members from domestic violence had been promulgated in 2014. Severe sentences had been handed down and fines exceeding the equivalent of US\$ 20,000 had been imposed.

22. Criminal Code provisions mitigating sentences for so-called honour crimes had been repealed. Work was also underway on repealing the provision whereby charges against perpetrators of rape were dropped if they married the victim. Draft legislation had been submitted in 2011 to amend personal status law. Personal status legislation was, in his view, at the heart of all other gender equality issues in Lebanon. Efforts had also been made to enhance gender equality in the socioeconomic field. Maternity leave had been increased from 7 to 10 weeks with full pay in both the public and the private sector. Gender-based discriminatory provisions in tax legislation had been repealed. In addition, mothers were now entitled to open credit lines with banks for their underage children.

23. **Mr. Murillo Martínez** enquired about the State party's expectations, and role, with regard to the high-level meeting to address large movements of refugees and migrants to be hosted by the United Nations General Assembly on 19 September 2016. He welcomed the repeal of provisions on so-called honour crimes, and had requested data on cases involving such crimes when the provision had still been in force. He strongly encouraged the State party to eliminate the provision exonerating rapists from criminal responsibility if they married the victim.

24. **Ms. Dah**, supported by **Mr. Kemal** (Country Rapporteur), welcomed the State party's efforts to promote gender equality, in particular the repeal of the so-called honour crimes provisions. She encouraged the State party to seize the momentum created by those achievements to accelerate further progress concerning personal status legislation, among others.

25. **Ms. Shepherd** asked whether paid maternity leave was also available to unmarried women. She also wondered whether there had been any discussion on paternity leave.

26. **Ms. Hohoueto** enquired why progress on legislation providing for gender equality with regard to acquisition of nationality had stalled.

27. **Ms. Mohamed** wished to be informed about legislation on early marriage.

28. **Mr. Karam** (Lebanon) said that data on so-called crimes of honour would be submitted in writing. There was a comprehensive strategy on gender equality that included elements on paternity leave. A comparative study had been conducted of Arab and Western countries, with particular attention to France, as the Lebanese legal system was based on the French legal system, and draft legislation had been prepared on that basis. When assessing progress made in achieving gender equality in citizenship matters, it was important to bear in mind that efforts took place in a challenging context. Lebanon was home to 2.5 million refugees, neighbour to several countries where religious fanaticism was rife, and essentially a multi-religious society.

29. The National Commission for Lebanese Women had submitted a bill regulating the marriage of minors, which was currently being discussed in the Lebanese Parliament's Human Rights Committee and Administration and Justice Committee. Marriage legislation

in Lebanon was specific to confession, of which there were 18, and it had been suggested that all confessions should agree on a minimum age for marriage of 16 years. Highlighting the efforts of international civil society organizations, which had been closely involved with the process, he said that he would be glad to provide the Committee with a copy of the bill.

30. **Ms. El-Kjatib** (Lebanon) said that prior to 2001, there had been no specific legal provisions regulating the crime of human trafficking. One of the most important measures had been the adoption of Act No. 164 of 24 August 2001 concerning the punishment of the crime of trafficking in persons, which defined trafficking as any act involving sexual exploitation, coercion into prostitution or forced labour, enslavement, or subjection to practices akin to slavery, among others. It provided for compensation for the victims and punishment of the perpetrators. Victims were afforded protection and compensation regardless of their nationality, gender or age. Implementation of the law was monitored by the relevant State authorities, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and the Human Rights Institute of the Beirut Bar Association. A joint committee comprising representatives of the relevant ministries, the Human Rights Institute and the Higher Council for Childhood had published two manuals on fighting trafficking in persons: one on the reasons, components and measures to combat the crime of human trafficking, and another on human trafficking indicators.

31. With regard to protection measures, she said that a decree had been prepared to regulate the work of non-governmental organizations assisting victims of human trafficking. There was close cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sectors, the latter being regarded as a key partner in human rights work. In that framework, the Ministry of Justice, the Internal Security Forces and the Directorate General of Public Security had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Caritas Lebanon; a copy of the document could be provided to the Committee. As part of the State's efforts to prevent trafficking in persons, law enforcement agents, labour inspectors and top-ranking officials of the Department of Labour Inspection were trained in the principles and rules governing the treatment of victims and perpetrators of trafficking.

32. With regard to foreigners' right to a fair trial, she said that the Code of Civil Procedure set forth the right of litigation for all persons residing in Lebanon, regardless of nationality. Likewise, legislation on judicial fees drew no distinction between Lebanese nationals and foreigners. However, foreigners filing a criminal law suit were required to pay an additional fee as a guarantee against abuse of the right to file suit. The measure sought to prevent situations, for example, where a foreigner filed a criminal law suit and subsequently left the country. The additional fee could be waived if the judge found there to be valid reasons to do so, such as poverty or insolvency. Pursuant to article 416 of the Code of Civil Procedure, foreigners legally residing in Lebanon were entitled to legal aid, provided that there were reciprocity agreements with the applicant's country of origin. Act No. 164 gave foreigners specific rights with regard to judicial proceedings, including the right of victims of human trafficking to remain in Lebanon for the duration of the proceedings.

33. There was no specific legislation on racial discrimination or hate crimes in Lebanon. However, the Criminal Code, the Television and Radio Broadcasting Act No. 382 and the Press and Publications Act contained provisions for punishing hate crimes and incitement to hatred, details of which were contained in paragraphs 32, 33 and 34 of the State party report (CERD/C/LBN/18-22).

34. Any propaganda against foreign workers based on racial supremacy and discrimination was prohibited. In 2014, the Ministry of Labour had issued Cautionary Memorandum No. 48/1, which required all recruitment agencies for foreign domestic workers to remove advertisements that breached humanitarian values on pain of prosecution for human trafficking.

35. **Mr. Rhayem** (Lebanon) said that all foreigners, except Israeli nationals, were free to work in Lebanon, subject to prior authorization from the Ministry of Labour. The professions exercised by foreigners in Lebanon were divided into four categories according to wages. The category of domestic workers had been the subject of some interest owing to substantial inflows of migrant domestic workers relative to the size of the population. The foreign worker system was governed, in order of precedence, by the Lebanese Constitution, international agreements, labour law, social security law and budgetary laws (under which fees were paid for the authorization to work in Lebanon). The system included a regulatory dimension, a protection framework to prevent the exploitation of workers, and provisions to protect the Lebanese workforce from competition. A decree on foreign workers, implemented under the oversight of the Ministry of Labour, enshrined in the principle of prior authorization which stipulated that any person holding such authorization to work could not change his place or type of work without prior consent. There were no prohibitions on working in Lebanon based on nationality, with a large proportion of migrant domestic workers originating from Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Pakistan. However, no foreigner could legally work in Lebanon without entering into a contractual relationship with an employer, since a contract was required to complete the prior authorization process. Under existing regulations, those agencies that brought domestic workers to Lebanon had a critical mediation role. Lebanon had mechanisms for investigating complaints by domestic workers, although it had not yet ratified the ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181). The Ministry of Labour had issued many decisions in respect of those agencies, which were subjected to inspections and could have their authorization revoked if they were found to have broken the law on the rights of foreign workers. Lebanese labour law enshrined a number of workers' rights, namely the right to a salary, to non-discrimination, and to medical annual leave, maximum working hours, and compensation for additional work.

36. All workers in Lebanon had the right to join a trade union, although foreign workers were not permitted to stand as representatives. Domestic work was exempted from Lebanese labour law and was instead subject to the code on obligations and contracts. To bridge the regulatory gap, efforts had been undertaken to improve the situation of workers. For example, a unified work contract had been introduced which employers were obliged to sign when requesting authorization. Such contracts had been introduced in 2009 and conferred certain rights upon domestic workers; for example, employers had to undertake to provide decent working conditions, including accommodation, clothing and health insurance; working hours had been limited to 10 hours per day, with 8 hours of continuous rest at night, a weekly rest of 24 hours and 6 days of annual leave. Employers were also obliged to provide a return air ticket at the end of the contract, save where the worker had committed an offence punishable under Lebanese law.

37. Two contrasting positions had emerged in discussions on the regulation of domestic workers; the first was that domestic workers should be covered by labour legislation, and the second was that domestic work was of a special nature and required a separate text. International organizations were advocating the inclusion of domestic workers in future legal texts, thus improving legal protection; however, in the meantime they were not protected. The unified contract had been a step forward, but it required mechanisms to guarantee implementation, including the possibility of the worker having access to justice without having to go through the employer. That was not the case at present, as could be seen from the rarity of court cases related to domestic work. There was a gulf separating international conventions and Lebanese legal texts on domestic workers. The ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) enshrined many rights, such as trade union rights, the abolition of forced labour and child labour, non-discrimination, the determination of wages without discrimination based on gender, as well as guarantees such as social security and the right to access justice and conflict resolution mechanisms. Lebanon was reviewing the

possibility of ratifying that Convention, and had prepared a draft law on decent work for domestic workers, which would shortly be sent for approval. Since domestic work was exempt from labour and social security legislation and also fell outside the scope of special protection regulation, there were no means of guaranteeing access to justice for domestic workers, since their residence was conditional on their employment contract.

38. He expressed appreciation of the Ministry of Labour for its follow-up efforts on the protection for domestic workers, which had included establishing a complaints office that could be contacted by a hotline. The labour inspection department had carried out 93 investigations into the agencies that brought in domestic workers, which had led to a number of prosecutions resulting in custodial sentences or fines. Priority was being given to modifying the labour framework, in order to stem emigration flows of Lebanese citizens and to regulate the entry of foreigners in a way that was not detrimental to Lebanese interests.

39. **Ms. El-Kjatib** (Lebanon) said that she wished to address two issues that the Committee had raised in relation to the protection afforded domestic workers by the justice system, concerning instances where employees' passports had been retained by the employer, and the issue of access to justice in relation to the rights of domestic workers. The Lebanese State was opposed to abuses and violations of employees' rights by their employers and was endeavouring to ensure respect for the freedom of movement of domestic employees. Accordingly, it viewed the retention of the worker's passport as an infringement of their freedom of movement. In June 2014 a petition had been filed by a domestic worker against her employer, which had resulted in the employer being forced to return the passport, setting a precedent in the justice system. That ruling had stipulated that freedom of movement was a constitutional right guaranteed to all members of the community, regardless of nationality. In response to the question of how persons who were confined to their employers' residences could access their rights, she said that the labour authorities had prepared a guidebook on domestic workers' rights, available in all the languages spoken in their countries of origin, which was given to those employees upon arrival at the airport. As mentioned, a hotline service was also available, whose number was also given to domestic employees upon arrival. Any domestic worker could call that hotline and the Ministry of Social Affairs would follow up on the complaint.

40. On the whole, foreigners were not discriminated against in terms of access to justice, and their rights were not limited in any way; however, despite the absence of legal obstacles, there might be cultural barriers that inhibited them from approaching the courts. The authorities, in cooperation with non-governmental and civil society organizations, were seeking to raise awareness among domestic workers so as to make them conscious of their rights. Domestic workers could bring civil proceedings before courts on contractual matters, such as rescinding their contract. They also had access to fast-track proceedings, for example when their passport had been confiscated by their employer, and could bring criminal proceedings in the event of being the victims of an offence. In Lebanon, most court cases brought against employers related to physical abuse and violence, sexual abuse, rape, and wrongful accusation (for example, false charges of theft) against their employees. Cases brought by employees against their employers were relatively uncommon, but civil society and the Ministry of Labour had been fully involved in increasing employees' awareness of their rights.

41. **Mr. Raad** (Lebanon) said that the Lebanese parliament was considering a bill that would create a national human rights commission. That commission would be made up of 14 standing members, including former judges, experts in criminal, general, human rights and humanitarian law, a forensic doctor, a psychiatrist, and human rights activists and journalists. The commission would monitor and promote national human rights in accordance with the Lebanese Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and

other international instruments and treaties, and relevant Lebanese human rights laws. Its powers and functions would include ensuring that Lebanon's laws were in harmony with its international commitments; data-gathering on human rights matters; resolving problems through mediation or the courts; disseminating a human rights culture and ensuring that school syllabuses had a human rights component; working with Ministry of Education and other education authorities to develop human rights and humanitarian law programmes; creating awareness-raising campaigns in the media on respect for human rights and humanitarian law; organizing symposiums and training programmes for public and private authorities; and publishing and promoting books on human rights. The commission would also have the duty of monitoring the human rights situation in Lebanon and following up on the implementation of humanitarian law in the country. For example, it could follow up and evaluate any laws, decrees and judicial decisions to ensure that they complied with Lebanon's international human rights commitments. During conflicts, the commission would be responsible for ending impunity. It would also be responsible for drawing up reports containing human rights recommendations. Once the parliamentary commission had approved the bill, it would be advanced to parliament for adoption. Unfortunately it had not yet been enacted owing to the paralysis that had gripped Lebanese institutions for the reasons mentioned earlier. He expressed the hope that Lebanon would witness the birth of its national human rights institution upon the resumption of normal activity.

42. **Ms. Dah** said that it was important that once the national human rights commission had become operational, it should obtain the "A" status that the Committee required in order to confer speaking rights at its meetings. She said that the proposed mandate of the national human rights institution seemed to be correct and to meet the requirements and needs of Lebanon. It was likely that the institution's independence would be ensured, since that was a prerequisite for gaining "A" status. It was also advisable to ensure that it received the necessary financial and human resources to properly fulfil its mandate.

43. She said that she had been moved by the introductory speech of the head of delegation, and recalled that there would be a high-level summit on refugees and migrants in September 2016. While Lebanon had been dealing with migration for 70 years and Africa had long experience of that issue, the international community had only recently become aware of the problem because some of its members had been affected. The war in Syria and the fear of terrorism had contributed to its sudden willingness to address the problem. She expressed the hope that Lebanon would participate in the summit with all its persuasive powers, and that although the outcome document seemed rather closed, Lebanon's convictions and long-standing experience could contribute to making the text more open and allow for the insertion of some of the concerns affecting Lebanon. Lastly, she expressed the hope that Lebanon's preparations would bear fruit in ensuring that international solidarity prevailed in addressing the migratory issue.

44. **Ms. Assaker** (Lebanon) expressed gratitude to Ms. Dah and the Country Rapporteur for mentioning the high-level meeting in New York. She said that she took a positive view of the summit convened by the United Nations Secretary-General, which would provide a vital platform for Lebanon to share its concerns with the United Nations. The summit would deal with the fate of 244 million people in the world, including internally displaced persons, refugees, economic migrants and persons displaced by climate change, declining living standards or armed conflict. All of those reasons spurred individuals to seek out a better standard of living, but given the huge differences in migrants' legal status and in the circumstances of their countries of origin and of destination, a general one-size-fits-all approach was not appropriate. Lebanon had already stated its position, including its humanitarian concerns, ahead of the New York summit. She said that she did not agree that the outcome document seemed to have been pre-prepared.

45. Her delegation did not share the view that the outcome document of the high-level summit had already been pre-prepared. Lebanon was not seeking to definitively resettle refugees, as it hoped that they would be able to safely return home one day. There were more than 4 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon. While a number of international donor conferences had been held to address the issue, the promises made at those conferences had never materialized. Her country needed international assistance in order to effectively address the situation.

46. **The Chair** said that the Committee shared the delegation's concerns about the refugee crises and hoped to ensure that international standards such as the Convention would serve as the basis for any agreement reached on the matter.

47. **Mr. Rhayem** (Lebanon) said that the bill on the establishment of a national human rights institution did specify that the institution should be independent. It also provided for the establishment of a committee for the prevention of torture.

48. **Mr. Kemal** said that he was concerned by the fact that equality was defined in general terms in Lebanese law. In a legal context, it was important to have precise definitions of such concepts. The problem could be solved by incorporating into national law the definition of racial discrimination contained in the Convention.

49. **Ms. Hohoueto** said that she was concerned about the difficult situation facing foreign domestic workers, some of whom had been brought into the country by networks that controlled their movements and their access to information. It was important for labour inspectors to carry out unannounced visits to homes where foreign domestic workers were employed.

50. **The Chair** requested further information about the results achieved through the hotline available to domestic workers. She also asked what had been done to change society's attitude towards members of that very vulnerable group and to recognize that the homes in which they worked were in fact workplaces.

51. **Ms. El-Kjatib** (Lebanon) said that there was no specific law that defined discrimination or set out punishments for discriminatory acts. The Constitution did, however, establish equality as a fundamental principle, and it was impossible for equality and discrimination to coexist. Thus, non-discrimination was also implicitly enshrined in the Constitution as a fundamental principle. Nevertheless, she agreed that there was a need to set out a legal definition of discrimination, and she would convey the Committee's comments on that matter to her Government.

52. The rights of domestic workers were a hot topic of discussion in Lebanese society. The Ministry of Labour, in cooperation with civil society organizations, was working to provide domestic workers with support and to raise their awareness of their own rights. Upon arrival at the airport, all domestic workers received a manual, in a language they understood, that outlined their rights and explained what to do if those rights were violated. In addition, anti-trafficking legislation was in place to punish members of trafficking networks.

53. **Mr. Avtonomov** asked whether the State party planned to conduct a census in order to better grasp the make-up of its population.

54. **Ms. Mohamed** said that the six days of annual leave granted to domestic workers was not in line with the labour laws and regulations in force in most countries of the world. She asked whether labour inspectors did in fact visit homes where domestic workers were employed and whether they interviewed those workers about their labour conditions. She expressed concern that the hotline might not be available to all domestic workers.

55. **Mr. Rhayem** (Lebanon) said that, in addition to six days of annual leave, domestic workers were also given one rest day per week. National labour laws did not apply to domestic workers. However, the Ministry of Labour had taken various measures to regulate their employment. While it did not fall within the mandate of labour inspectors to visit the homes where they were employed, social workers did make regular visits to those homes. A bill on the protection of domestic workers was currently being prepared and would stipulate that the homes where they worked must be inspected by social workers.

56. Pursuant to the decree regulating the employment of domestic workers, an employment contract setting out the contractual relationship between worker and employer must be signed before a work permit could be issued. No foreign worker could enter the country without authorization and a permit. Upon their arrival at the airport, the security authorities handed them over directly to their employer, not to any mediator or employment agency representative.

57. **Ms. El-Kjatib** (Lebanon) said that her Government recognized that there was some improvement to be made in the situation of domestic workers and that it was working to overcome the many challenges it faced and take the necessary measures to improve their working conditions. Protection of their rights must begin with raising awareness among the workers themselves about their rights, and the Ministry of Labour was working with NGOs to do just that.

58. Labour inspectors were being trained in how to deal with victims of human trafficking. The hotline was fully operational, and domestic workers were given the hotline number immediately upon arrival in the country. The relevant authorities followed up on all complaints received by the hotline.

59. **Mr. Murillo Martínez** requested clarification as to whether international human rights treaties enjoyed constitutional rank in the country's hierarchy of laws.

60. **Ms. El-Kjatib** (Lebanon) said that international instruments, once ratified, did take precedence over other laws as soon as they entered into force.

61. **Mr. Kemal** said that the exchange of views with the delegation had brought into stark relief the problems Lebanon had been facing for so many years without adequate support from the international community. The Committee would endeavour to reflect in its concluding observations some of the concerns expressed by the delegation in that regard. Other issues likely to be raised in the concluding observations included the definition of discrimination in national law, the possibility of banning racist organizations, the living conditions of refugees, and the situation of domestic workers. The Committee would emphasize that the international community should play a proportionate role in helping to resolve the refugee and migration crisis.

62. **Ms. Assaker** (Lebanon) said that her Government did have statistics on the population that covered a number of areas, such as labour and education. She thanked the Committee, and the Country Rapporteur in particular, for showing an understanding of the exceptional circumstances that Lebanon was facing. Her delegation was glad to hear that the Committee appreciated the contributions made by Lebanese Committee member, Mr. Khalaf. Lebanon was committed to taking all necessary measures to promote human rights in all areas, and it had already taken many such initiatives in cooperation with NGOs. Its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights was unwavering, and it would continue to cooperate with the United Nations system and the international community to that end.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.