Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Seventy-sixth session
Summary record of the 1992nd meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 1 March 2010, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Kemal

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Fourth and fifth periodic reports of Kazakhstan (continued)
The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Fourth and fifth periodic reports of Kazakhstan (CERD/C/KAZ/4-5; CERD/C/KAZ/Q/4-5; CERD/C/KAZ/Q/4-5/Add.1, document distributed in Russian only)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Kazakhstan took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. Telebayev (Kazakhstan) said that, despite being a young State, having achieved independence in 1991, the Republic of Kazakhstan had a long history and a rich cultural heritage that had been handed down by the peoples that had lived within its borders. Relations between the main ethnic groups within the population were characterized by mutual tolerance, which resulted from several centuries of peaceful coexistence and fruitful interaction between the different linguistic and religious communities. The country’s main religions were Islam and Orthodox Christianity; members of those religions accounted for almost 90 per cent of the population. Located at a crossroads, the Kazakh population had been influenced at the cultural, linguistic and religious levels, which explained its natural tolerance and openness to others.

3. Mr. Prokopenko (Kazakhstan) said that, with the exception of the incidents that had taken place at Aktau, all the inter-ethnic conflicts in recent years, including those at Shelek, Malybai, Malovodnoe and Mayatas, had happened in the south of the country. That region was densely populated: the villages generally had between 35,000 and 40,000 inhabitants, the population of a small town. Inter-ethnic conflicts rarely broke out in large urban areas for very specific reasons, notably the presence of large Uighur communities and the high youth unemployment rate in rural areas. Statistics showed that the birth rate among Uighur communities living in that region was three times higher than the mortality rate and that there were generally about six people in each Uighur family. Since very few Uighur individuals left to live in cities, they were very numerous in rural areas, which created tensions over access to farmland and employment or representation on local bodies. The tensions could have an inter-ethnic dimension, given that the Uighur minority dominated the goods and services market and had higher incomes than the local population. In order to resolve the socio-economic problems in rural areas and thus prevent inter-ethnic conflicts and encourage coexistence between the different minorities living in those regions, the Kazakh Government had launched a three-year programme for the development of the auls (village settlements) within the framework of the Strategic Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which would be implemented until 2020.

4. The People’s Assembly, established in 1995, had begun as an intermediary between the State and ethnic minority associations and acted as a consultant to the President of the Republic. Under the People’s Assembly Act, adopted in October 2008, it was particularly responsible for promoting cooperation between public bodies and civil society organizations to strengthen tolerance and understanding between ethnic groups, maintaining and promoting the development of the cultures, languages and traditions of the peoples living in Kazakhstan and providing the country’s ethnic and cultural organizations with methodological and legal assistance.

5. There were 820 ethnic and cultural organizations in the People’s Assembly. It was in permanent contact with 46 ethnic minority associations, which it consulted regularly at national and regional meetings. It organized seminars and symposia to inform the heads of those organizations about new measures that had been adopted to improve inter-ethnic relations. Its members were entitled to participate in formulating and implementing policies, drafting bills on inter-ethnic relations and ensuring the implementation of the right
of all Kazakh citizens to use their mother tongue and receive instruction in their own language. Every year, the Assembly secretariat approved an annual plan setting out projects for ethnic minorities. In 2009, 35 such projects had been launched and funds amounting to 146 million tenge had been allocated to them. The implementation of those projects would continue in 2010.

6. The People’s Assembly was not the only body responsible for implementing the policies for ethnic groups; all the relevant public bodies were also involved. Measures for the promotion of ethnic minorities planned for 2010 had been based on recommendations made by the head of State and the participants at the People’s Assembly annual meeting. In Parliament, a group of nine deputies elected by the People’s Assembly regularly considered issues that affected ethnic minorities.

7. Given that the socio-economic situation could affect inter-ethnic relations, the People’s Assembly was carrying out some sociological research in that field. According to a survey conducted in July 2009, ethnic Kazakhs were the most widely represented group in all occupational sectors (including construction, livestock, science, education, and health) except for business, where there were more Uzbeks and Tatars. Of those surveyed, about 28 per cent of Koreans, 20 per cent of Germans, 18 per cent of Uighurs and only 10 per cent of ethnic Kazakhs categorized themselves as wealthy; 55 per cent of ethnic Kazakhs, 50 per cent of Tatars and 43 per cent of Russians and Uighurs said they were middle class; and about 40 per cent of Kurds and 25 per cent of Ukrainians considered themselves of very modest means. While there were therefore socio-economic inequalities among the main ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan, on the whole the differences in income were not extreme. Nonetheless, in rural areas where there was a high concentration of some ethnic minorities, those differences could be considerable, which could lead to conflict. The Government aimed to reduce income equalities, given that the presence of a solid middle class guaranteed social stability.

8. Mr. Tastemir Abishev (Kazakhstan), replying to comments on the lack of a specific provision on racial discrimination in domestic legislation, said that the international instruments that Kazakhstan had ratified took precedence over domestic legislation and were directly applicable, which also therefore held good for the Convention. Furthermore, the Criminal Code provided that a racist motivation for an offence constituted an aggravating factor. It also prohibited any direct or indirect infringement of the fundamental freedoms and rights based on considerations such as race, ethnic or national origin, religion or language. Likewise, the Counter-Extremism Act, adopted on 18 February 2005, prohibited incitement to racial or religious hatred. Moreover, article 14, paragraph 2, of the Constitution, which provided that no one could be subjected to discrimination on grounds of origin, social, professional or property status, sex, race, nationality, language, attitude to religion, beliefs, place of residence or other circumstances, could be interpreted as covering all possible cases. The Code of Administrative Offences stipulated that a racist motivation for an offence under that Code constituted an aggravating factor.

9. On 5 May 2009, the President had approved the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2009 to 2019, in accordance with which and in order to implement article 4 of the Convention, the Kazakh Government and Parliament would draft a law against racial discrimination or, if necessary, a law establishing the administrative and criminal responsibility of individuals who proclaimed the superiority of a racial or ethnic group or who incited racial or religious hatred.

10. In November 2008, a programme had been adopted for the period 2009 to 2011 to raise public awareness of the law and to make teaching of the law more effective. The programme included draft bills to amend legislation and programmes to raise public awareness of human rights. The Committee for the Protection of Children’s Rights, which had been established in response to a recommendation from the Human Rights Committee,
was responsible in particular for acquainting children with both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

11. With support from the United Nations, the country’s Commission on Human Rights had set up a digital human rights library in order to give the public free-of-charge access to legal texts on human rights. In addition to the existing digital library in Almaty, there were plans to set up others within regional and local authorities. All the documents in the digital library were available in Russian and Kazakh, including the texts of the Convention and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and all the relevant information on the procedure whereby individual complaints could be brought before the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

12. According to statistics for 2009, two individuals had been tried for acts of racial discrimination under article 164 of the Criminal Code and eight others had been the subject of administrative proceedings for acts of racial discrimination. In 2009, the Commission on Human Rights had received 1,500 complaints, 3 of them relating to violations of the right to work, linked to discrimination on the basis of national origin. However, the complaints had been considered inadmissible.

13. Ms. Aukasheva (Kazakhstan) said that between 2004 and 2009 the Human Rights Ombudsman had received 20 complaints of discrimination on the ground of national affiliation, most of which acts had involved recruitment or dismissal by local State bodies. However, the Human Rights Ombudsman’s investigations had not enabled the allegations to be substantiated and several of the complaints had been withdrawn. Information on the procedure to be followed in order to lodge a complaint with the Ombudsman and on the international instruments that could be invoked, including the Convention, was published on the Ombudsman’s website. Furthermore, with support from international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Ombudsman ran human rights awareness-raising campaigns targeting Government officials, prison staff and local NGO representatives. He also published a newsletter reporting on his activities every three months.

14. Ms. Kultumanova (Kazakhstan) said that the freedom to choose one’s school and language of education was guaranteed in Kazakhstan. The current school system met the needs of children and families by allowing students to receive instruction in their mother tongue either in separate schools or in mixed schools, where students of different origins came together. Out of a total of 102,457 Uzbek children of school age, 79,109 received instruction in their national language, 18,490 in Russian and 4,858 in Kazakh. Teaching in Uzbek was available in 62 schools, where it was the only language used, and in 80 mixed schools. Meanwhile, there were 42,606 Uighur children of school age. Over a third of them studied in Uighur in 14 Uighur schools and 49 mixed schools. All in all, 19 languages were taught in 104 schools with a total of 14,000 pupils. Moreover, 81 Sunday schools also taught the languages, traditions and cultures of the different minorities.

15. A new generation of school textbooks and teaching methods placed particular emphasis on national minority language teaching. A total of 714 textbooks had been published in the different languages spoken and 672 books had been translated into Uighur, Uzbek and Tajik. Teacher training in Uighur, Uzbek, Tajik and the other languages had been improved. As a result of the teaching dispensed in the country’s training institutes, particularly the Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages and the Pedagogical University, the language skills of teachers who taught in languages other than Kazakh and Russian had improved significantly.

16. Kazakh and Russian were the two official languages of the Republic. They were therefore taught in all schools, with three hours of Russian a week in schools that taught lessons in another language and five hours of Kazakh a week in non-Kazakh schools. In
2009, measures had been taken to enable pupils in Uzbek, Uighur and Tajik schools to take part in a single examination system by choosing either to sit exams in their mother tongue or to take the national exams in Russian or Kazakh. Mixed examinations were also available. The Government had, moreover, undertaken to examine ways of facilitating access to higher education in the national minority languages. The Commissioner for national affairs of the Republic was implementing a pilot project for the integration of Uzbek school certificates into the Kazakh teaching and information system, which aimed to facilitate access to mixed education for students from Uzbek, Uighur and Tajik schools. In 2009, an international conference on strengthening social integration through multilingualism had been held in Kazakhstan, with the participation of the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Uzbek, Uighur and Tajik national and cultural centres. Those measures had enabled 1,195 students from those communities to enter university in 2009.

17. The history of the different groups and cultures that made up Kazakh society could not be dissociated from the history of Kazakhstan. It was included in school textbooks and taught to all students. That history consisted not of conflicts or hostile relations but rather of trade, exchange and dialogue. The Silk Route, for example, had an important place in the history books; it stood for the meeting of Asian and European cultures, a source of mutual enrichment. All history and literature textbooks contained information on the culture, history and traditions of the Uighurs, the Dungans, the Ukrainians and other minorities.

18. The policy on language teaching was regulated by the Languages Act, which included provisions on the State’s duty to create the conditions for the teaching and development of all languages, and by the Education Act, which had been amended especially to regulate the so-called mixed schools. The provisions whereby the education provided by those schools operated within the existing set-up did not constitute a refusal by the State to create the proper conditions. They simply aimed to take account of both the training and availability of teachers and the needs and wishes of the different groups concerned to receive instruction in their mother tongue. The ethnocultural dimension of the Constitution was therefore expressed in the educational system, which aimed to preserve the way of life and the cultural values of the various ethnic groups.

19. People were currently encouraged to learn the Kazakh language because it presented opportunities for integration in society and on the labour market. Indeed, Kazakh was increasingly used, especially by population groups from the diaspora, who did not have a full command of Russian. According to recent questionnaires and surveys, most young people in the country preferred to use one of the two official languages. Moreover, in a study published in 2006, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) had recognized Kazakhstan’s language policy as one of the most liberal in the world.

20. Mr. Habilsayat Abishev (Kazakhstan), after recalling that discrimination was prohibited under the Constitution, said that when legislative instruments were adopted they were examined in order to ensure that they did not include any discriminatory provisions or others that could result in discrimination. Cases of restrictions to citizens’ rights and freedoms or violations of the principle of non-discrimination could be brought before the Constitutional Council. That guaranteed that legislation on immigration and the status of foreigners conformed to Kazakhstan’s constitutional provisions and international obligations.

21. Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan had accepted over 200,000 ethnic Kazakh migrant families that had chosen to return, resulting in almost a million returnees, known as Oralman. Several steps had been taken to encourage and facilitate the return of Kazakhs from abroad; they could obtain citizenship even if they had not been resident for five years, they were not required to provide proof of funds and they received resettlement assistance. Foreigners with skills that were sought after in Kazakhstan could also be granted a waiver
of the five-year rule and obtain a residence permit. In addition, agreements had been reached with Belarus, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation to simplify the citizenship granting process. A programme regulating issues relating to returnees had been implemented since 2008, including measures to help people find housing and employment.

22. The Refugees Act had entered into force on 1 January 2010. To date, Kazakhstan had granted refugee status to 622 Afghans, 314 Tajiks, 146 Pashtoons, 107 Hazaras, 27 Uzbeks and 12 other individuals of various nationalities. No applications for refugee status had been submitted by Uzbeks or Chechens. The new Act included provisions on the issuance of travel documents to Afghan refugees and identity documents to stateless persons. It guaranteed respect for fundamental principles such as the confidentiality of information, the protection of children, family reunification and non-refoulement. Asylum-seekers were placed under the protection of the State; they had the right to reside in Kazakhstan for the duration of the asylum process, as long as they were registered with the Ministry of the Interior. Any rejection of an asylum application had to be explained in writing and was subject to appeal.

23. The changes in migratory flows should not be interpreted solely in the light of ethnic criteria. The increase in migratory flows was also linked to historical and economic factors. Many of the people who had come to Kazakhstan during the industrialization of the country, under the “Virgin Lands” programme, had left once Kazakhstan had gained independence. However, emigration had slowed down significantly in recent years. There was less need for family reunification and the economic and political situation of the country had stabilized. The domestic stability accounted for the positive net migration rate for the period 2004–2005. In 2009, there had been an estimated 67,500 foreigners resident in the country.

24. **Mr. Ryskulov** (Kazakhstan) said that the central and local authorities were endeavouring to guarantee respect for legislation governing the use of the Kazakh and Russian languages in all branches of the civil service and all official activities. Any civil servant who infringed such legislation, for example by refusing to register a document or complaint on the grounds that he or she did not understand the language used, was liable to disciplinary and administrative sanctions. Strict rules also applied to product labelling and advertising. The Office of the Procurator-General carried out regular checks on conformity with the legislation on languages. In 2009, it had performed 6,450 checks, which had resulted in disciplinary action against 9,956 individuals and administrative penalties imposed on 5,300. Measures were also taken to raise awareness among those concerned and prevent them from breaking the law.

25. According to available figures on prosecutions for incitement to hatred for the period 2003–2007, the majority of cases concerned acts of incitement to religious hatred, mostly through leaflet distribution. Of the 222 breaches recorded, 15 concerned incitement to racial or religious hatred. There had been relatively few convictions, owing to the difficulty of identifying the persons who had handed out the documents.

26. **The Chairperson** thanked the delegation for its detailed replies and invited the Committee members to ask additional questions.

26. **Mr. Murillo Martínez**, remarking on the huge surface area of Kazakhstan, requested additional information on the land tenure of the different ethnic groups. In particular, he asked whether access to land was a source of tension among the various ethnic minorities.

27. **Mr. Avtonomov** commended the State party for its reintegration policy for children of ethnic Kazakh repatriates, known as Oralmans. He wished to know whether Kazakhstan had established any cooperation programmes with neighbouring countries with a view to encouraging Kazakhs to return or to maintaining links with Kazakhs who had found
themselves outside the national borders after independence. According to non-governmental reports, the policy of systematically renaming towns that had Russian names had raised issues among the population and even created tensions between communities; he would welcome the delegation’s comments on that question.

28. **Ms. Crickley** said that, while she took note of the delegation’s assertion that the Office of the Ombudsman had received only 20 complaints of discrimination, the small number did not mean that discrimination no longer existed in the State party. She wished to know whether there were any policies that aimed to raise awareness about the complaints mechanisms or to make it easier for Kazakh citizens to lodge complaints of discrimination. She welcomed the steps taken for a more effective fight to combat discrimination and racism in society and wondered whether the authorities planned to adopt comprehensive legislation on racial discrimination. Lastly, she would like additional information on the representation of ethnic minorities in the People’s Assembly.

29. **Mr. de Gouttes** noted that, according to the periodic report (page 25), the authority and status of religion were growing, its social functions were expanding and the numbers of believers and religious associations were increasing. He wished to know why religions were gaining in power and whether there was a link between the increase in religious practices and the interfaith tensions that had been reported in the country.

30. **Mr. Amir**, referring to the transport problems experienced by people living in remote mountain areas, who found it hard to sell their agricultural produce in towns, asked whether the State party planned to allocate part of its budget to developing the road network in order to put an end to the marginalization of remote rural communities.

31. **Ms. Onlasheva** (Kazakhstan) said that prior to independence Kazakhstan had been a communist and secular State where religious practices had been barely tolerated. After independence the Kazakh authorities had sought to promote other values and had demonstrated considerable religious tolerance. Religious plurality was a reality although 74 per cent of practising believers were Muslim. There had been no increase in interfaith tension and the incidents to which Committee members had referred were attributable to one prohibited organization, which claimed to be fighting religious pluralism in the interests of Islamic supremacy.

32. **Mr. Tuyakbayev** (Kazakhstan) said that while the term “national minority” did not appear as such in the Constitution it was mentioned in normative acts linked to international human rights instruments. However, the term had negative connotations in Russian. All ethnic groups had the same legal status in the country and the different national minorities reflected the diversity of interests. Kazakhstan believed that all national minorities had a shared historical destiny and should therefore contribute to the promotion of national cohesion.

33. **Ms. Utegenova** (Kazakhstan) said that interfaith harmony was widely recognized in the country and that there was no alternative to dialogue between religions and civilizations. In that connection, Kazakhstan was one of the countries that had campaigned at the United Nations General Assembly for 2010 to be designated International Year of the Rapprochement of Cultures.

34. **Mr. Kozhabayev** (Kazakhstan) explained that the Constitutional Council ascertained the constitutionality of international agreements before they were signed and ratified and, where there was any discrepancy with national legislation, international treaties and agreements could not be signed or enter into force in Kazakhstan. That was why there was no provision on the denunciation of international treaties where there was a discrepancy with domestic legislation.
35. In addition, the Constitutional Council guaranteed, throughout the territory of the Republic, the protection of the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution, inter alia, in article 14, paragraph 2, which provided that no person should be subject to any discrimination whatsoever based on race, ethnic origin or any other circumstance.

36. In reply to a question from Mr. Thornberry, article 19 of the Constitution recognized the right of everyone, without exception, to use their mother tongue, to practise their native culture and to choose freely the language in which they communicate, and raise and educate their children. The State programme on the use and development of languages for the period 2001–2010, confirmed by Presidential Decree No. 550 of 7 February 2001, had been designed to secure not only the revival and extension of the use of the Kazakh language but also the preservation of the general cultural use of the Russian language and the development of the languages of ethnic groups.

37. Mr. Lepeha (Kazakhstan), replying to the questions concerning the situation of foreigners on Kazakh territory, said that the Constitution guaranteed the right to freedom of movement throughout the country and to freedom of residence. The Aliens (Legal Status) Act, which implemented that constitutional provision, defined foreigners’ principal rights and obligations and regulated their entry, residence and movement within the country and their departure. Article 3 of the Act provided that foreigners were equal before the law, irrespective of their origin, social or property status, race, nationality, sex, education, language, attitude to religion or the type or nature of their activities.

38. In 2009, some 1,167,000 foreigners had been registered in the country, the majority of them from the Commonwealth of Independent States. Kazakhstan had ratified the Commonwealth’s Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms on 31 December 2009.

39. Regarding the Committee’s recommendation during its consideration of the previous periodic report, that Kazakhstan should ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, a working group had been set up to consider the legislative amendments needed for ratification. In 2010, Parliament was due to adopt a migrants bill that would encourage workers with managerial and specialist skills to come to the country. The bill would set out measures to prevent clandestine immigration and the penalties for trafficking in persons, among other offences.

40. With regard to Mr. Avtonomov’s request at the previous meeting for additional information on the causes of the inter-ethnic clashes that had occurred in the country, he said that the Ministry of the Interior had drawn up a plan to prevent inter-ethnic conflicts, focusing on the root causes of disputes. In 2008, a study of the factors that often led people to commit crimes had formed the basis of measures taken throughout the country, particularly in areas with large ethnic populations or where housing and land issues caused tensions. The study had been used to identify areas where there was a risk of inter-ethnic and interfaith conflict.

41. Ms. Nurgazieva (Kazakhstan), replying to the question why there was no criminal provision prohibiting the dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority, said that associations that aimed to promote social, national, religious, class or clan hatred were banned under article 5, paragraph 3, of the Constitution and that legislation on associations prohibited the establishment of associations with any such aims.

42. As for the operational measures that had been taken to combat racially motivated offences, the Ministry of Culture and Information had set up a task force to ensure that all media respected existing legislation. The task force, which answered directly to the Minister, monitored the legality of comments and statements in the printed press and on radio and television 24 hours a day. Whenever an offence was identified, the legislation...
was implemented. If articles published in the media needed checking or a thorough expert assessment, the law enforcement authorities were immediately informed so that they could take appropriate action. Only the courts had the power to adjudicate violations of the Mass Media Act, which provided, inter alia, that all propaganda for or incitement to cruelty and violence or social, racial, ethnic, religious, class or clan superiority constituted grounds for broadcasts to be interrupted. According to a survey conducted at the end of 2009 at the behest of the Ministry, 55.1 per cent of Kazakhs expressed satisfaction with the way inter-ethnic relations had developed in Kazakhstan.

43. Regarding the land issue, the notions of “minority” and the land rights of minorities did not exist in Kazakhstan. Indeed, under article 6 of the Constitution, the land — the subsoil and all the other resources on Kazakhstan’s territory — belonged *ipso jure* to the State.

44. Mr. Tastemir Abishev (Kazakhstan), replying to Ms. Crickley’s question as to whether Kazakhstan planned to adopt a single Act on racial discrimination, said that the Constitution prohibited distinctions based on race or national or ethnic origin and that other domestic regulations punished discrimination based on race. The authorities were currently considering the possibility of consolidating all those provisions into a single text or establishing a separate criminal and administrative liability applicable to the authors of such offences.

45. Mr. Telebayev (Kazakhstan) said that his country certainly did not plan to adopt the Latin alphabet and that the committees responsible for renaming towns took citizens’ views into account. While it was true that the Russian names of towns and villages had been “Kazakhized”, the names remained understandable to everyone, including Russians.

46. Mr. Thornberry said that he failed to understand the delegation’s explanations about the term “national minority”, not least why the State party thought it pejorative. Although Kazakhstan was not a party to the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities but had supported the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 27 of which contained the expression “ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities”. Given that the rights of minorities should be guaranteed, whatever terminology was employed, he recommended that the State party should use the language of international law in order to avoid any confusion.

47. Mr. Diaconu (Country Rapporteur) commended the quality of the dialogue between the delegation and the Committee and the highly informative replies that the delegation had provided. The most serious problem that the country had to address was how to continue fostering mutual understanding and respect between the different ethnic groups and the majority population and educating the latter. All Kazakh civil servants should receive training in the culture of human rights and non-discrimination.

48. He recommended that the State party should pay greater attention to the economic and social causes of inter-ethnic and interfaith conflicts. The Government appeared to have begun analysing the situation along those lines and should continue to do so.

49. Kazakhstan should also pay particular attention to the regions with large populations from ethnic groups and ensure that they were consulted on all plans and decisions affecting them directly so that they thought of themselves as fully fledged citizens before the law.

50. Mr. Telebayev (Kazakhstan) said that the Government would closely study the Committee’s recommendations on his country’s periodic report and circulate them to the public.
51. **The Chairperson**, thanking the Kazakh delegation, said that the Committee had reached the end of the first part of its consideration of the fourth and fifth periodic reports of Kazakhstan.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*