



**International Convention on  
the Elimination of All Forms  
of Racial Discrimination**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**  
**Eightieth session**

**Summary record of the 2144th meeting**

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 24 February 2012, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. Avtonomov

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*Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Turkmenistan* (continued)

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

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

*Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Turkmenistan* (continued)  
(CERD/C/TKM/6-7; CERD/C/TKM/Q/6-7)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Turkmenistan took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Erniyazov** (Turkmenistan) said that, in accordance with article 1 of the Constitution, Turkmenistan was a secular State and, in accordance with article 3, the State placed the highest value on the human person. The country had achieved its independence 20 years previously and had been one of the few republics of the former Soviet Union that had not experienced bloodshed during the transition to democracy. All issues had been resolved through peaceful dialogue.
3. As an agricultural country, however, Turkmenistan had lacked basic infrastructure so that major reforms had been required to promote the well-being of society as a whole. Many factories had been built and the State had invested heavily in well-equipped and comfortable housing. The State covered half the cost of an apartment and provided mortgage loans for the remainder; they were repayable over a 30-year period at just 1 per cent interest. A presidential decree issued in September 2011 had ruled that young married couples should be allowed a five-year grace period before beginning to repay their loan.
4. In 1997, Turkmenistan had become one of the first countries in Central Asia to declare a moratorium on the death penalty.
5. Turkmenistan did not divide its population into ethnic groups or minorities because it believed that all citizens were equal and enjoyed the same rights under the Constitution and other domestic legislation. For instance, they were all entitled to the same social welfare benefits and pensions. Electricity, gas and more than 1.5 tons of petrol were supplied free of charge to all citizens. Over 70 per cent of the current budget had been earmarked for social requirements and more than 5,000 social building projects were being implemented. Oil refineries and textile factories were being built in many towns, offering ample employment opportunities.
6. During the period 2006–2011, a total of 7,309 persons belonging to ethnic minorities had returned to Turkmenistan. The State treated them all equally, regardless of their ethnic background, nationality, gender and race.
7. The existing statistical data for his country were out of date and a new census would be organized in December 2012. The Government had invited international experts to offer advice and had sent Turkmen experts abroad to study international standards. Once the census was completed, Turkmenistan would be able to provide the Committee with more accurate data.
8. Article 177 of the Criminal Code provided for criminal responsibility for deliberate acts intended to incite social, national, ethnic, racial or religious enmity or discord, or to offend national pride, and for propaganda attributing superior status or inferiority to citizens on the basis of their attitude to religion or their social, national, ethnic or racial background. Parts 2 and 3 of the article characterized the use of the media, the use or threat of use of physical force, or the use of violence by organized groups for such acts as aggravating factors. Articles 14–16 of the Criminal Code defined concepts such as the preparation or planning of those acts, which would entail inchoate liability if a person was unable to complete the act because of circumstances beyond his or her control. Offences under article 177 entailed either a fine or deprivation of liberty. In general, the purpose of criminal

legislation was not solely punitive. It also sought to promote rehabilitation. Offenders should therefore be encouraged to rectify their behaviour and reintegrate into society. It was for the courts to decide on the appropriateness of the penalty in each case. If offenders had no criminal record, if they were motivated by remorse to rectify their conduct and engage in community service activities, or if they were responsible for the care of small children or relatives with disabilities, the court had the option of imposing a sentence that did not involve deprivation of liberty.

9. The independence of the judiciary was enshrined in the Constitution. In addition, the Courts Act, promulgated in 2009, stipulated that judges should be independent, subject to the law and guided by their personal conviction in their consideration of the evidence. Judges were not subject to anybody else's authority. Lack of respect for the judiciary and interference in court affairs were inadmissible. Under article 5 of the Courts Act, justice in Turkmenistan was administered on the basis of equal rights and freedoms, the principle of adversarial proceedings, and the equality of all before the law and the courts regardless of ethnic background, race, gender, origin, financial situation, official status, place of residence, language, attitude towards religion, political convictions, party affiliation or lack thereof, or other circumstances not stipulated by law. Everybody was also entitled to challenge a judgement through the courts. Under article 102 of the Constitution, judges of all courts were appointed by the President for a five-year term.

10. A "good-neighbourly holiday" was held annually, during which food was prepared and distributed to neighbours, regardless of their ethnic origin.

11. Under the Complaints by Citizens and Procedure for their Consideration Act promulgated in 1999, all citizens were entitled to raise issues with any State body. The officials concerned were required to reply promptly in writing. In the case of complex issues, the time limit for a response could be extended to 15 or at most 45 days. No distinction was made on grounds of nationality or ethnic origin. Any official who failed to respond within the limit set would be liable to disciplinary action. The Office of the Procurator Act, promulgated in 1999, also established procedures and time limits for responses to petitions.

12. No Turkmen officials had engaged in hate speech against ethnic minorities. Such conduct was incompatible with the country's tradition of good neighbourliness.

13. Article 2 of the Parliamentary Elections Act, promulgated in 2008, stipulated that Turkmen citizens who had reached the age of 18 had the right to vote. Any direct or indirect restriction of citizens' electoral rights on the basis of ethnic background, race, gender, origin, property status, official position, place of residence, language, attitude to religion, political views, party affiliation or lack thereof was prohibited. Article 30 laid down the procedures for selecting candidates for the Majlis (parliament). Meetings were convened by political parties at the central, provincial and municipal levels to nominate candidates, who could also be nominated by civil society organizations. A single candidate was selected by a public or secret ballot for each electoral district.

14. The Labour Code, which had been adopted in 2011, stated that citizens' right to work was guaranteed by the Constitution and included the right to free choice of employment and the right to protection against unemployment. Every citizen had the exclusive right to use his or her capabilities for productive and creative work and to engage in any activity not prohibited by law. Every citizen also had the right freely to choose a workplace directly through an employer or through public employment agencies or services, which provided free assistance in the selection of suitable work and finding a job. A person signing an employment contract was required to produce an identity document, a certificate of completion of military service, evidence of his or her education and

qualifications, and a certificate of good health. An employer could not demand any additional documents.

15. Citizenship requirements were regulated by the 1992 Turkmen Citizenship Act, as amended in 2003. Applicants were required to undertake to respect the Constitution and laws of Turkmenistan. They were further required to have a speaking knowledge of the Turkmen language, to have been resident in Turkmenistan for at least seven years, and to have a legal source of income in the country. In exceptional circumstances, the President could grant Turkmen citizenship to a person who only met the first condition, i.e. who gave an undertaking to respect the Turkmen Constitution and laws. An accelerated procedure was in place for Turkmen living in States other than those that had formerly been part of the Soviet Union, and for Turkmen and their descendants who had been forced to leave on account of political oppression or persecution. They were entitled to citizenship if they met the first, second and fourth conditions. Persons who had been deprived of citizenship could have it restored if they submitted an application and either resided in Turkmenistan or planned to return to the country. They were required to meet the first and second conditions.

16. **Mr. Aydogdyev** (Turkmenistan) said that, since 1995, the local office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had assisted more than 6,000 Afghan and Tajik refugees to return to their homes. In 2003, there had been over 14,000 refugees in the country; local authorities had provided them with plots of land, agricultural equipment and access to medical services free of charge. In August 2005, his Government had granted citizenship to more than 13,000 displaced persons and refugees and permanent residence to a further 3,000. Currently, there were no refugees in the country. At the international level, the Government was planning to host a conference in May 2012 on the problems of refugees in the Muslim world, in cooperation with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and UNHCR.

17. In December 2010, the Government had adopted an action plan for joint activities with UNHCR to prevent and reduce statelessness in the country. Under the plan, the Government would finalize the registration of all stateless people and those at risk of becoming stateless. The President had granted citizenship to more than 3,300 stateless persons residing in the country. Turkmenistan had acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons in December 2011.

18. **Mr. Orazov** (Turkmenistan) said that the law ensured the free development and use of Turkmen, Russian and the languages of other peoples residing in the country. Under article 5 of the Education Act, the languages of instruction in schools were determined by the education authorities in accordance with the law. Under international agreements, schools could be established in which the main medium of instruction was a foreign language. In those schools Turkmenistan's official language was used for teaching subjects that were part of the national component of the curriculum. Members of other national minorities living in the country, such as Kazakhs, could study their own language and literature at mixed schools. Details concerning foreign-language learning were contained in the report (CERD/C/TKM/6-7, para. 179). Following curriculum reforms, new school textbooks covering a range of subjects had been published in national minority languages. Members of national minorities were also participating in study-abroad schemes.

19. **Mr. Erniyazov** (Turkmenistan), responding to a question about the fact that there had been no complaints of racial discrimination, said all citizens who considered that their constitutional rights or freedoms had been violated could file a complaint with a court of law. The court had 10 days within which to rule on the merits of the case. Efforts had been made to raise citizens' awareness of their rights; the Convention had been published and widely disseminated, and its implementation was being monitored.

20. Various forms of redress were available to national minorities for violations of their rights. They could bring civil suits or criminal proceedings, and the public procurator could also authorize criminal prosecutions. Decisions by courts to award damages had binding effect.
21. Turkmenistan had ratified the ILO Discrimination Convention, 1958 (No. 111) on 15 May 1997 and had submitted its initial periodic report.
22. There were no persons of African descent residing permanently in the country, although there were some migrant workers of African descent. There were currently no Roma in Turkmenistan. No official application to register the Armenian Church had been filed.
23. **Ms. Atajanova** (Turkmenistan) said that the Culture Act had been passed in 2009 with a view to reviving and promoting the use of the culture of the peoples of Turkmenistan. Details concerning the Act were contained in paragraphs 196 and 197 of the report. A number of other laws had been adopted to implement State policy in the area of culture, including the Museums Act, the Libraries and Librarianship Act and the National Applied Arts and Crafts Act. Members of ethnic minorities participated actively in all areas of cultural life, including annual arts festivals and competitions.
24. Under a presidential decree of August 2011, the mandate of the Interdepartmental Commission on compliance with Turkmenistan's international human rights obligations had been extended to include international humanitarian law. Accordingly, representatives of the Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan and the Ministry of Defence were now members of the Commission. A working group had been established on the incorporation of the provisions of international humanitarian law in domestic legislation. The Commission, which operated within the framework of the Paris Principles, was working to increase its capacity to provide human rights protection. As part of that process, a fact-finding mission had travelled to Denmark to consult the Danish Institute for Human Rights, with the president of the Danish Institute paying a return visit in November 2011. Plans for various short and long-term cooperation projects were being discussed.
25. The National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights had carried out awareness-raising activities among the population as a whole on Turkmenistan's obligations under the international instruments to which it was party, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Seminars had also been conducted with representatives of law enforcement agencies, State bodies, local authorities and NGOs to disseminate the concluding observations of the different treaty bodies. The Ministry of Education was planning to open five human rights resource centres in the various regions; they would be located in higher education establishments and open to the general public. Programmes were also in place to train staff in higher education to teach human rights courses.
26. An academy for civil servants provided human rights training courses for senior and middle-ranking public officials and representatives of local authorities.
27. **Mr. Erniyazov** (Turkmenistan) said citizens had free access to the Internet. However, as elsewhere in the world, there was restricted access to sites that endangered the health, morals or security of the population, such as those that incited violence or contained child pornography.
28. The Physical Education and Sport Act ensured the right of every citizen to engage in sport. Funding was made available to develop the necessary infrastructure and provide support to particular population groups, such as children and persons with disabilities. In 2011, an Olympic complex had been opened in Ashgabat.

29. Responding to a question on residence permits, he stated that the *propiska* system facilitated the provision and regulation of social services, medical care and military service. Under the system, residents were assigned doctors and received medical attention and maternity care in their homes, and those who had to perform compulsory military service were allocated to military units.

30. Turkmenistan had a special interdepartmental commission on ensuring compliance with the country's obligations under international treaties. The Government had decided to bring national legislation fully into line with international law, and that process was currently being monitored.

31. With regard to article 14 of the Convention, an active assessment and monitoring process was undertaken before Turkmenistan committed to any international obligations. The process included a review of the experiences of other countries, as well as the rights and obligations under the legislation in question. The review was conducted with the aid of international specialists and national experts on jurisprudence. The matter was under consideration and the Government would inform the Committee of the outcome of the process.

32. **Mr. Orazov** (Turkmenistan) said that all citizens had access to health care, education and employment; ensuring that such access was available to national minorities constituted an important part of national policy. Under the provisions of chapter 4 of the 2005 Health Act, all persons present in Turkmen territory, regardless of their nationality or ethnic origin and including stateless persons, were guaranteed access to health services. The State provided a range of free medical services to children and primary care was guaranteed by the State health system.

33. The Government guaranteed the right of all children, regardless of nationality, gender or ethnic origin, to education provided in accordance with State standards. Materials, such as textbooks, laboratory equipment and computer access, were provided free of charge. The Ministry of Education also cooperated with various international bodies, such as UNICEF and the European Erasmus programme. The Government was working to strengthen the education system, in accordance with international standards, inter alia through staff training. In 2011, the President had provided personal netbooks to all pupils in the first grade of secondary school, and a presidential decree of January 2012 aimed to further develop standards.

34. **The Chairperson** expressed the hope that coordination and cooperation with the Danish Institute for Human Rights, including the programme of visits, would continue.

35. **Mr. Diaconu** (Country Rapporteur), noting that Turkmenistan had a large number of legal provisions intended to prevent and combat discrimination, asked whether those provisions were applied in practice or whether any of the old, discriminatory practices remained.

36. Given that the delegation had indicated that the *propiska* system was now only used for the provision of social services, he asked whether it imposed any restrictions on freedom of movement. Were people obliged to remain in the area in which they were registered? And might identity cards be a solution to the problem?

37. With regard to the reference in article 177 of the Criminal Code to "deliberate" acts inciting violence or hatred, he expressed concern that it was difficult to prove or objectively infer intent behind such acts.

38. He requested the Government to provide the previously mentioned missing data in its forthcoming report.

39. With regard to consultation with ethnic groups, it was not a matter of responding to questions from individuals. Consultation mechanisms involved meetings between government authorities and representatives of ethnic community organizations to discuss the problems, wishes and needs of ethnic minorities, who made up 5.2 per cent of the population.
40. Noting that the delegation had made no mention of Uzbeks, he considered that it was important not to ignore that group.
41. It was clear that the teaching of official languages should be compulsory. However, he wished to know how minority languages were studied, namely whether they were taught as a second language in schools in areas with large ethnic minority populations. Were there schools where at least primary education was provided in minority languages? The delegation had mentioned the teaching of Russian, English and Turkmen. However, it was possible that ethnic groups which spoke other languages wished to study those languages. The issue was important from the point of view of preserving culture and language.
42. The delegation had indicated that procurators could take up cases which had appeared in the press and launch legal inquiries. However, the involvement of the press could be problematic as, in certain cases, people might be afraid to contact the authorities and press coverage could make it difficult to hold a fair trial. The Government should be careful in its approach to the matter.
43. He welcomed the delegation's response to the questions on stateless persons, and noted its statement that there were no refugees in Turkmenistan. He requested clarification as to the reasons for that situation, given Turkmenistan's proximity to Afghanistan and Iran.
44. The delegation had indicated that people needed to be aware of legislation and their access to the legal system. He wished to point out that the State was obliged to inform the general public of their rights, provide information on how to file complaints, and help people to understand the relevant issues and procedures.
45. **Mr. Erniyazov** (Turkmenistan) said that all Turkmen citizens had access to law. Legislative provisions relating to the office of the public procurator clearly stated that rigorous compliance with law was essential for all civil servants. Citizens could also approach trade unions, and unions themselves could file requests or complaints with institutions. All legislation was implemented in a coordinated manner.
46. With regard to the *propiska* system and freedom of movement, the Constitution stipulated that citizens had the right to live wherever they wished. The system was designed to help citizens, who had no trouble accessing social or health services. The Housing Code also clearly stated that citizens could reside in any place and move freely within Turkmenistan.
47. On the issue of article 177 of the Criminal Code and the question of "deliberate" actions, criminal legislation in Turkmenistan made use of that provision to establish criminal responsibility. In criminal cases involving premeditation, that article applied, while other articles of the Criminal Code covered other aspects, such as the seriousness of a given offence. If the offence had not been premeditated, a different article would apply.
48. On the question of the public procurator, the citizen's advice bureaux and the role of journalists, he said that citizens could decide to whom they wished to submit a complaint and could choose to speak to a judge, lawyer or journalist.
49. When the media reported on a case, the story was sometimes told without reference to specific suspects. If, after reading such reports and checking the facts, the law enforcement authorities found any indication that an offence had indeed been committed, they could initiate legal proceedings.

50. With regard to consultations on the rights of minorities, the legislation on NGOs and civil society organizations provided that organizations which included members of ethnic minorities could submit initiatives or contact Government departments or ministries regarding issues of concern.

51. The 1999 law on citizen's appeals stipulated that all citizens had the right to appeal, either individually or with the assistance of an NGO. The provisions of the 2011 law on political parties stipulated that if a party had members who belonged to an ethnic minority, they had the right to appeal to parliament or the relevant ministry.

52. Relations with Uzbeks living in Turkmenistan were excellent. Inter-marriage between Uzbeks and Turkmen was common and many Uzbeks held posts in public bodies.

53. **Mr. Orazov** (Turkmenistan), responding to a question on official languages and language teaching in schools, said that Russian and English were taught in all schools. There were some secondary schools where, in addition to the two core languages, students could learn another language, such as German, French, Arabic or Farsi. Children from national minorities were taught in their mother tongue, in accordance with the school curriculum. Ethnic minority languages were taught in 127 schools. Students were admitted to higher education establishments on the basis of equal competition, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds.

54. **Mr. Aydogdyev** (Turkmenistan) said that the main influx of refugees had taken place following the civil wars in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. As there was currently no widespread fighting in those countries, there were no refugees arriving from them. The majority of Afghan refugees had returned home, while the Tajiks who had remained in Turkmenistan had obtained residence permits or Turkmen nationality. The UNHCR office in Turkmenistan, in cooperation with the Government, now focused on addressing issues relating to stateless persons. There were currently 62 refugees who did not want to return home or stay in Turkmenistan, and the UNHCR office was trying to organize access to third countries.

55. **Mr. Ewomsan**, noting that Turkmenistan had been a part of the former Soviet Union, which had organized exchange programmes for African students, asked about the situation in Turkmenistan concerning racism towards persons of African origin. Given that the delegation had indicated that Turkmenistan was a welcoming society, he wished to know how persons of African descent were perceived and what measures had been taken to address the problem of racism, which affected other former Soviet republics.

56. **Mr. Erniyazov** (Turkmenistan) said that no racism existed or had existed in his country. While persons of African descent did not constitute a specific ethnic group in Turkmenistan, such persons did come to Turkmenistan on business and were covered by the law on the legal status of foreign citizens, which stated that all rights and privileges under the Constitution, such as access to medical services, extended to foreign citizens present in the country. The concept of racism was alien to Turkmenistan, as its people were welcoming and tolerant, treating other national groups with respect. He also drew attention to the various festivals celebrating diversity organized around the country.

57. An ethnic group comprising persons of African descent did not exist in his country. All foreign citizens who entered Turkmenistan were covered by the law on the legal status of foreign citizens, which stated that all rights enshrined in the Constitution applied equally to foreign citizens. Those people were protected by the State and enjoyed services such as health care on an equal basis. The Turkmen people were very tolerant and treated all national and ethnic groups with respect.

58. **Mr. de Gouttes**, noting the importance of an independent justice system that guaranteed the right to due process for all persons, asked whether the Procurator-General

and judges were appointed by the President of Turkmenistan with the approval of parliament, in the same way as the President of the Supreme Court. He encouraged the State party to establish a fully independent national human rights commission that complied with the Paris Principles, as had been recommended by the Human Rights Council within the framework of the universal periodic review. He expressed surprise at the fact that there had been no complaints of racial discrimination, which was not necessarily a positive thing since it was difficult to imagine that ethnic prejudice simply did not exist. In that regard, he referred the delegation to the Committee's general recommendation No. 31 on the prevention of racial discrimination in the administration and functioning of the criminal justice system.

59. **Mr. Erniyazov** (Turkmenistan) said that the Procurator-General, like the President of the Supreme Court, was appointed by the President of the Republic with the approval of parliament. The procedure for appointing judges was somewhat different; a collegiate commission attached to the court assessed each candidate for the office of judge and submitted a recommendation to the President of the Supreme Court. The latter made a decision, which he communicated to the President of Turkmenistan, who then appointed the judge.

60. **Ms. Atajanova** (Turkmenistan) said that the State party was working hard to develop a national human rights commission in accordance with the Paris Principles. The project had been under way since 2009 and was expected to be completed in late 2012. Work on the subject was being carried out in conjunction with various international partners, including United Nations agencies, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and comprised an in-depth study of the institution of ombudsman. As part of that work, European ombudsmen and parliamentarians had shared their experience, and OSCE was providing support in a technical assistance project to improve the processing of statements and appeals by citizens to the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, including through enhanced use of databases.

61. **Mr. Murillo Martínez** expressed concern at the alleged practice of tracing the origin of Turkmen citizens back to the third generation, and the possible repercussions that could have in terms of their access to higher education and senior civil service posts. He would welcome further information in that regard.

62. As to the 7,000 or so persons belonging to ethnic minorities who had returned to Turkmenistan after having left the country, he asked to what ethnic minority group they belonged and why they had left Turkmenistan in the first place. He looked forward to learning the results of the 2012 census, which would, he hoped, provide comprehensive information on ethnic diversity.

63. **Mr. Erniyazov** (Turkmenistan) said that tracing the origin of Turkmen citizens back to the third generation was not practised in his country. The Labour Act listed the five documents that applicants were required to produce when applying for a job, and stated that employers must not request any documents apart from those. Access to higher education was available to all citizens, regardless of racial origin or ethnic group, as established in the Constitution. The only requirement was that prospective students must have obtained the intermediate secondary school certificate. If they had not, a commission attached to the higher education establishment could decide to allow them to take an entrance examination instead.

64. With regard to persons belonging to ethnic minorities returning to Turkmenistan, he said that people left for all kinds of reasons, e.g. to look for a better job or because they had relatives in another country. However, people often missed the advantageous living conditions they had enjoyed in Turkmenistan, such as free gas and petrol and inexpensive

food, and decided to come back. In his view, that had probably been the case with the 7,000 returnees in question.

65. **Mr. Vázquez** expressed concern that the wording of article 177 of the Criminal Code was too general, making it possible for the provisions to be interpreted in a very broad manner, including to the detriment of human rights defenders and ethnic minorities themselves. The offences defined in the article represented much more lenient standards than the offence of incitement to racial hatred and discrimination specified in article 4 of the Convention. There had been some confusion about the terminology used in article 177; it would therefore be useful if the Committee could receive a copy of the Criminal Code so that an authoritative translation could be obtained.

66. He asked if there was a link between the ground of incitement to violence invoked by the delegation as one of the possible grounds for restrictions on the use of Internet and the offences defined in article 177. If so, the ground of incitement to violence ran the risk of being interpreted in a similarly broad manner, which could result in widespread restrictions being placed on the use of the Internet, as had been reported by NGOs, some of which had allegedly had access to their websites blocked. Noting that it was important for NGOs to be able to operate freely, he asked the delegation to provide information about the standards used for the imposition of restrictions on websites, and how they were applied.

67. **Mr. Erniyazov** (Turkmenistan) said that there appeared to have been some misunderstanding about the wording of the Criminal Code. To clarify matters, he read out the wording of article 177 again. It was also an offence to commit the acts specified in that article via the mass media or the Internet, or through the use — or threatened use — of violence. In his view, it was not possible for article 177 to be used against ethnic minorities themselves. There was free access to the Internet, and reports that websites had been blocked would therefore be investigated. Preliminary work was being carried out with a view to bringing domestic legislation on media and Internet issues into line with international law.

68. **Mr. Amir**, noting that the delegation had stated that there were no refugees in Turkmenistan, asked whether the President's powers to grant and withdraw citizenship were provided for under the Constitution.

69. **Mr. Erniyazov** (Turkmenistan) said that the right of the President to grant and withdraw citizenship was indeed established in the Constitution. That right was implemented in conjunction with the law on the presidency and the law on citizenship, which specified the cases in which the President was authorized to grant or withdraw citizenship.

70. **Mr. Diaconu** (Country Rapporteur) asked whether persons could move freely between regions and continue to benefit from social services in the new region. His suggested areas of action by the State party were the following: the relationship with minorities should be improved and institutionalized; minority languages and cultures should be promoted; a mechanism for submitting complaints about discrimination in the implementation of legislation should be provided for; the general situation of democracy should be improved; and the commitments entered into by the State party during the periodic review process should be implemented.

71. **Mr. Erniyazov** (Turkmenistan) confirmed that persons could move freely between regions and continue to benefit from social services in the new region. He thanked the Committee for its comments and recommendations, which would be given full consideration. His Government was committed to strengthening cooperation with international organizations; the relations between the State party and the United Nations system were underpinned by the principles of mutual benefit, the consideration of national

interests and the implementation of international standards. It would continue to do its utmost to bring Turkmen legislation into line with international standards.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*