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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Seventy-second session

Summary record of the 45th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 5 October 2022, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Abdel-Moneim

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(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (*continued*)

Fourth periodic report of Tajikistan

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports (*continued*)

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (*continued*)

Fourth periodic report of Tajikistan (E/C.12/TJK/4; E/C.12/TJK/Q/4; and E/C.12/TJK/RQ/4)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Tajikistan joined the meeting.*

2. **Mr. Ashuriyon** (Tajikistan) said that since Tajikistan had gained its independence, the country had resolved to build a democratic society where human rights and freedoms were recognized as the loftiest of values.

3. On 28 September 2022, the Government had held consultations with representatives of civil society and received their comments on the fourth periodic report of Tajikistan.

4. The Government's main priority was to strengthen social and political stability in order to achieve human development and sustainable economic growth. Between 2016 and 2021, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) had grown by 7 per cent annually. Cash earnings had increased threefold, and the average salary had almost doubled.

5. In the area of health, the President had directed the Government to implement prevention measures since the onset of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Key population groups had received three rounds of vaccination against COVID-19, with a coverage rate of 90 per cent. Between 2016 and 2021, new medical facilities had been built to provide 2,361 hospital beds and 4,053 polyclinic consulting stations.

6. The National Development Strategy for the period up to 2030 was designed to eradicate poverty, ensure sustainable models of production and consumption, and promote the conservation and sound management of natural resources. A medium-term development programme had been implemented between 2016 and 2020 in a number of priority areas, including education, health care, inequality, anti-corruption efforts, effective governance, food and energy security, and the environment. A similar programme had been adopted for 2021 to 2025.

7. In the previous five years, public sector salaries had been increased three times. In July 2022, public administration and law enforcement officials had received a pay rise of 15 per cent, while employees in the education sector had received 20 per cent and social workers had received 25 per cent. Pension payments had increased by an average of 20 per cent.

8. Thanks to employment support programmes, between 2018 and mid-2022, 118,000 persons had been placed in jobs and 7,000 young persons had been employed under quota systems. In the same period, 45,000 young persons had attended short courses at vocational training centres, 9,000 had carried out paid community service and 33,000 had received unemployment benefits. In addition, 993 persons with physical disabilities had obtained employment under quotas.

9. On 19 July 2022, Tajikistan had adopted legislation aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination. The legislation established a legal system to prevent discrimination and protect people from it. All persons had the right to form, join and leave trade unions. Under the Constitution, everyone was entitled to health care, including free medical attention in public institutions, and to free education at

public schools, including at the secondary level. In 2015, government funding for education had stood at 2.5 billion somoni (SM), amounting to 5 per cent of GDP; by 2021, funding had been increased to almost 6 per cent of GDP, with SM 5.3 billion being allocated to the sector. For health care, in 2015, government funding had stood at SM 1 billion, amounting to 2 per cent of GDP; by 2021, funding had been increased to 3 per cent, with SM 2.9 billion being allocated to the sector. Government spending on social insurance had increased from SM 2.6 billion in 2015 to SM 4.2 billion in 2021.

10. Within the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, there were 43 offices providing home-based social assistance, 48 centres providing social services for persons with disabilities and day care for elderly persons, and 3 rehabilitation centres. A single database had been set up to store information on persons with disabilities; as of 2021, 153,556 individuals had been registered in it, representing 1.6 per cent of the population.

11. The draft Education Code contained a separate chapter on inclusive education. As of 2021, 10,485 children with disabilities had been registered, and 7,362 such children were in education, including 651 in preschools, 1,642 in special education programmes and 830 in home schooling. In February 2021, an accessibility programme had been adopted with the aim of promoting social support for persons with disabilities and ensuring that they had equal opportunities to participate in social life.

12. **Ms. Shin** (Country Rapporteur) said that she wished to know whether the State party had any plans to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Covenant. She would welcome clarification of whether the Covenant and the Committee's concluding observations formed part of the training curricula aimed at Supreme Court judges. It would be useful to receive an update on the independence of the judiciary, which the State party had committed to ensuring during its second universal periodic review.

13. While the State party's steady economic growth was commendable, the World Bank had reported that the country's external debt had more than doubled in the previous decade. In addition, the State party was among the countries that were most dependent on remittances from citizens working abroad. She would be grateful for details of any plans to tackle those issues.

14. The State party was ranked at 153 out of 198 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index published by Transparency International. Despite the enactment of a number of laws and strategies to tackle corruption, it was still widespread. She would welcome an account of the root causes of corruption in the State party. It was unclear how the National Anti-Corruption Council, which was part of the Government, maintained its independence, and whether it was competent to deal with complaints and whistleblowing.

15. She would also welcome details of any cases that had been brought under the newly adopted Act on equality and elimination of all forms of discrimination. She would appreciate clarification as to whether the formulation "other circumstances" meant that all other grounds of discrimination not specifically mentioned were encompassed by the legislation. It would be helpful to know how the authorities ensured that the judiciary and the general public were aware of the new legislation.

16. The Committee had received reports that certain groups faced severe discrimination, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and persons with a criminal record. She wished to know how the new anti-discrimination legislation would be applied to persons in those groups.

17. Persons living with HIV also reportedly experienced discrimination. She would be interested to hear about any plans to review legislation that contradicted the new Act, including Government Decree No. 475 of 25 September 2018, which prevented persons living with HIV from, *inter alia*, studying in medical educational institutions and adopting children. She would also like to know whether the State party had made any progress towards decriminalizing the transmission of HIV, in line with a recommendation made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2018.

18. While the Committee welcomed the State party's plans to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it was concerned at reports that some persons with disabilities were forced to undergo abortions. She would appreciate confirmation that the new anti-discrimination legislation would protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

19. In its previous concluding observations (E/C.12/TJK/CO/2-3), the Committee had recommended that the State party should remove the restrictions on the freedom of movement and the choice of residence of asylum-seekers and refugees imposed by presidential resolutions No. 325 (2000) and No. 328 (2004). She would welcome an update on any progress that had been made in that regard. She also wished to learn about any steps being taken to put an end to the deportation of Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers, including some who had already been granted the proper legal status.

20. It would be useful to know whether the State party intended to accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, as well as whether the authorities planned to ensure that all children born in the territory of the State party had access to registration and birth certificates, irrespective of the legal or documentation status of their parents.

21. It would be helpful to receive an update on any steps that had been taken to ensure that the Commissioner for Human Rights was fully independent, in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

22. She would appreciate clarification of whether the provisions of the Code of Administrative Offences criminalizing the dissemination of allegedly inaccurate information about COVID-19, the spreading of infectious diseases and failure to wear a face mask in public places were still in place.

23. She would welcome an explanation of the reasons for the enactment of legislation requiring non-profit organizations to report on their funding sources. It would be useful to hear how the State party authorities engaged with civil society in the area of economic, social and cultural rights. She would welcome the delegation's response to a joint statement issued on 3 October 2022 by the

International Partnership for Human Rights and the World Organisation against Torture, in which those organizations had expressed serious concern about the “non-transparent and politically motivated” nature of proceedings against seven human rights lawyers and journalists and had called on the authorities to drop the charges and immediately release the defendants.

24. She wished to know whether the State party allocated sufficient financial resources to ensure that guarantees of equal rights and opportunities were upheld. She would welcome an update on the State party’s review of the recommendation made to it in 2018 by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to make domestic violence a separate criminal offence. She would be grateful for information on how applications regarding the prevention of domestic violence were followed up and monitored once they had been forwarded to the relevant government agencies by the Commissioner for Human Rights.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at 10.55 a.m.

25. **Mr. Ashuriyon** (Tajikistan) said that the inclusion of “other circumstances” among the possible grounds of discrimination listed in the new Act on equality and elimination of all forms of discrimination was intended to ensure that the law would cover any new grounds of discrimination that might emerge in the future. Released prisoners and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons did not face any restrictions in access to employment.

26. Refugees were permitted to remain in Tajikistan in accordance with domestic legislation and international standards. Refugees who broke the law would be expelled. Children born to refugee parents on the territory of Tajikistan would be registered by the relevant authorities upon submission by the parents of a document confirming the birth.

27. The journalists and human rights defenders who had been arrested in Tajikistan had committed offences under the Criminal Code that were unrelated to their professional activities. The individuals in question had the right to see a lawyer and were being detained in accordance with the law, pending preliminary investigation or trial.

28. Domestic violence had hitherto been addressed under various articles of the Criminal Code. However, the Government was currently considering its criminalization as a separate offence, in accordance with United Nations recommendations, and for that purpose was preparing an amendment to the Criminal Code.

29. **A representative of Tajikistan** said that the President of Tajikistan had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in New York on 22 March 2018. Since then, the Government, assisted by international organizations, had developed a road map to prepare for ratification of the Convention, which would likely take place in 2023. In 2013, the Supreme Court had adopted a decree on the application of international human rights standards by the courts and law enforcement agencies, which had resulted in courts increasingly invoking the provisions of international human rights treaties. In order to combat corruption, the Government was preparing new laws, including one on public procurement, and strengthening the work of inter-institutional agencies.

30. The Act on Amnesty in Connection with the Regularization of the Legal Status of Foreign Nationals and Stateless Persons Staying Unlawfully in Tajikistan (the Amnesty Act) would be in force until the end of 2022. However, the Government was considering extending its period of application. Many foreign citizens and stateless persons had regularized their status under the Act.

31. In 2014, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights – the national human rights institution – had been awarded B status by the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. The Government had set up an inter-agency working group to resolve issues related to the Office’s funding and the election of its members, so that it might be awarded A status. The Government had drafted and was currently considering a national plan for the development of human rights for the period until 2030, which it expected to adopt in late 2022 or early 2023. Efforts were under way to create the position of a commissioner for the protection of the rights of entrepreneurs within the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights.

32. **A representative of Tajikistan** said that, in recent years, Tajikistan had maintained stable economic growth, despite a dip in 2020 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the previous six years, the employment rate had increased by 6.9 per cent, so that the employed population now exceeded 2.5 million. Annual GDP growth had averaged about 7 per cent, while GDP per capita had increased by 10 per cent. Recognizing the country’s mineral wealth, the Government had identified 800 locations for the extraction of natural resources and had issued licences for extraction at over 40 sites. Industrial production had doubled since 2016, as the Government had implemented an import substitution programme, boosting the domestic production of essential goods with a view to increasing economic self-sufficiency. Exports of cement, paper, cotton, food and electricity were booming.

33. The external debt had indeed increased in recent years. The debt-to-GDP ratio stood at approximately 60 per cent. However, the external debt, as a proportion of GDP, had fallen by 2.6 percentage points since 2017. In November 2020, the Government had adopted a national debt management strategy for 2021–2023, which aimed to strengthen oversight over external borrowing. The Government was committed to sustainable debt management and was able to fully repay its debt in a timely manner.

34. The Government had identified inclusive development and the reduction of inequality – including inequality between men and women – as priorities. The National Development Strategy for the period up to 2030 contained specific measures and indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the Government’s policy on gender equality. In terms of non-discrimination before the law and equal access to justice, the Government, with the support of the Swiss Cooperation Office, had provided free legal assistance to vulnerable women, including victims of domestic violence, migrant women, single and separated women and stateless women. The Statistics Agency conducted research on gender equality, published demographic indicators and disaggregated data, and monitored State programmes for the prevention of domestic violence. Efforts had been made to sensitize all branches of government to gender issues and to incorporate a gender perspective in budgeting and statistical processes.

35. **A representative of Tajikistan** said that the rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS in Tajikistan were fully respected in accordance with international human rights treaties. The Government provided them with access to antiretroviral therapy as a matter of priority; coverage stood at more than 90 per cent. Children living with HIV/AIDS were well integrated into society and almost all

of them received antiretroviral therapy. There had been no complaints of discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS in the sphere of employment. Persons diagnosed as HIV-positive fully exercised their legal rights, including the right to treatment, and they were not subjected to any compulsory measures.

36. Women in Tajikistan had a high level of awareness of their rights, including abortion rights. The Government worked constantly to raise public awareness in that regard, especially among women of childbearing age in regions with high birth rates. Forced abortions had been eradicated. The contraceptive prevalence rate currently stood at 42 per cent.

37. The confinement measures adopted by Tajikistan during the COVID-19 pandemic had been comparatively mild: the authorities had not applied punitive measures against infected persons. The Government had set up a special field office and an electronic system for tracking vaccinations and test results – measures that had enabled the vaccination of over 90 per cent of target groups in the adult population.

38. **Mr. Ashuriyon** (Tajikistan) said that women victims of domestic violence could turn to various State institutions for support, including safe houses and rehabilitation centres established through cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund; women's resource centres; public associations; and information and outreach centres. In 2017, the Committee for Women and the Family had launched a toll-free domestic violence hotline. The Ministry of the Interior had worked with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to build the capacity of law enforcement agencies to prevent and respond to domestic violence, including through investigations and the protection of victims. Training courses on combating domestic violence had been added to academic curricula in 2016, and the Ministry of the Interior had developed training for women who worked on domestic violence issues.

39. The Public Associations Act had been amended in order to meet the country's international obligations to prevent money-laundering and the financing of terrorism. Under the amended law, public associations were required to notify the authorities of voluntary contributions, donations, grants and property received from foreign governments and organizations and to enter information in that regard in a special register. Those requirements had been introduced to enhance transparency and were not considered a form of reporting to the Government.

40. The periodic report submitted in 2020 had been prepared with the participation of all interested non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Government had drafted a plan, in consultation with NGOs, for the implementation of its human rights reporting obligations. NGOs also participated in the meetings of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights. Thus, the Government regularly consulted NGOs in order to receive information about their concerns; to effectively implement the recommendations issued by United Nations bodies; and to develop mechanisms for addressing situations requiring the Government's attention.

41. **A representative of Tajikistan** said that the Committee for Women and the Family, as the body responsible for women's issues in Tajikistan, regularly implemented programmes to prevent gender discrimination and promote equality between women and men, all of which were fully funded. In 2021, the Government had adopted the National Strategy to Promote the Role of Women for the period 2021–2030. Gender-sensitive land-use norms had been introduced into the Land Code. The enactment of the law on microfinance organizations had led to a significant increase in the number and value of the microcredits that the banking system granted to women entrepreneurs.

42. At the parliamentary elections held in 2020, the representation of women in the Majlis-i Oli, the parliament of Tajikistan, had increased from 19 per cent to 24 per cent in the lower chamber and from 19 per cent to 26 per cent in the upper chamber. Similar improvements had been observed in the regional governments. According to the Civil Service Agency, as at 1 January 2022, women accounted for 24.1 per cent of civil servants. Women also made a significant contribution to the health sector and to the education system, where they accounted for 41 per cent of teachers. In agriculture, over 40,000 women were heads of *dekhans* farms.

43. **Ms. Shin** said that she would appreciate receiving written answers to questions raised by the Committee in the list of issues in relation to the fourth periodic report of Tajikistan (E/C.12/TJK/Q/4): public expenses as a percentage of GDP; inflation-adjusted absolute levels of social spending; and remittances as a percentage of GDP. She wished to know whether the Government intended to take measures to halt the deportation of Afghan refugees. She wondered whether the State party would hold an open forum after the review of its periodic report to discuss the Committee's concluding observations with NGOs.

44. **Ms. Saran** said that she would be interested to learn whether any assessment had been carried out to determine why the Government's external debt had doubled and to what extent the current level was viable and sustainable. She would appreciate additional information about the State party's experience of obtaining official development assistance from other countries, and an explanation as to how effective such assistance had been in helping the State party to fulfil its obligations to protect people's rights under the Covenant.

45. **Mr. Windfuhr** asked what were the main provisions of the draft law on non-profit organizations and how they ensured that the legitimate activities of such organizations were not impeded.

46. **A representative of Tajikistan** said that the country's level of external debt had been assessed by the Central Treasury and was closely monitored by the Ministry of Finance. A strategy was in place to manage public debt over the period 2021–2023. Social welfare was the largest expenditure, accounting for more than half of the State budget, followed by education and health care.

47. The Government was working to increase industry's share of GDP in line with the National Development Strategy for the period up to 2030, which was based primarily on the Sustainable Development Goals. Many of the country's major imports had been substituted with domestically manufactured products as a result of the medium-term programme for the period 2016–2022. However, additional funds were required to develop the country's manufacturing sector, hence the further increase in external debt.

48. **Mr. Ashuriyon** (Tajikistan) said that national programmes were drawn up for the implementation of the concluding observations of all United Nations treaty bodies with input from the relevant non-profit organizations. The Government also held events with the

participation of such organizations to raise awareness of the programmes. There were plans to simplify the process for registering non-profit organizations and to assist them in their work, but the necessary legislative amendments had not yet been submitted to the parliament.

49. Afghan people who broke the laws of Tajikistan must face the same consequences as any other offenders. The border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan was over 1,300 km long and the Taliban, which was itself recognized internationally as a terrorist organization, was unable to control the various terrorist groups, including Da'esh, operating in Afghanistan. Those groups posed a serious threat to the security of the entire region. If border controls had been enhanced, it was to ensure the safety of the Tajik people.

50. **Ms. Ravenberg** (Country Task Force) said that she would appreciate a description of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market, unemployment and the informal sector. She wished to know what policies were in place to help former prisoners reintegrate into the labour market, and whether data were gathered on their employment. Were records made of employers' refusal to hire such persons, with an indication of the reason for refusal? She would be interested to hear how the Government ensured that quotas for the recruitment of former convicts were enforced.

51. She wished to know whether a study had been conducted of the situation of workers, especially women, in the shadow economy and, if so, what the outcome of the study had been. She wondered whether figures were available regarding those workers and whether the State party had an action plan to tackle exploitation and violations of their labour rights, such as the withholding of pay. Noting that the number of workers who were paid in arrears had decreased, she was keen to learn how the arrears had accrued in the first place, whether there was a policy to reduce and prevent them in the future, and whether agreements for the payment of outstanding wages had been reached with the workers concerned. She would like to know what was the current implementation status of the plan launched by the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment to eliminate wage arrears and what measures the plan contained.

52. It would be helpful to have an explanation of what the moratorium on inspections in industrial workplaces entailed. Did it extend to labour inspections? She wondered how the moratorium was implemented in practice and whether it had resulted in the creation of more jobs. She would be interested to hear whether the moratorium's effects on employment had been evaluated and, if so, whether any adjustments had been made. She wished to know whether the new minimum wage that had been introduced by presidential decree in January 2022 applied only to civil servants; what steps the State party was taking to protect workers in the informal sector; and whether programmes were in place to create incentives for employers to hire women, including single mothers, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV and persons who combined work with education.

53. She wondered why, according to the Committee's information, four fifths of the unemployed population did not receive benefits. Statistical data concerning unemployment benefits would be welcome. She would like to know whether the draft social protection strategy for the period up to 2035 had been approved and when the Government intended to implement the strategy.

54. It would be useful to have statistical data on the number of people who were unemployed but had not registered with the authorities owing to the complex and highly bureaucratic registration system. Could it be made simpler, easier and more accessible? She asked whether the State party intended to grant financial benefits to parents of children with disabilities and to increase the allowance for persons with disabilities, which was currently less than half the minimum wage.

The meeting was suspended at 12.15 p.m. and resumed at 12.25 p.m.

55. **A representative of Tajikistan** said that the median age of the Tajik population was just over 25 years. The country had a high birth rate and a significant proportion of the population was under 15 years of age. The laws on social protection and promotion of employment were intended to increase employment among young people and persons with disabilities, and various strategies and policies had been introduced to that end.

56. Statistical data on participation in the labour market were gathered during the population census. The most recent census had been conducted in 2020 and the data were being processed in electronic format. The results would be available by 2024.

57. Hundreds of thousands of new jobs, including permanent, temporary and seasonal positions, had been created over the previous five years. Approximately a quarter of those were in the agriculture sector, while the other major sectors included fisheries, education, mineral extraction, construction, and health and social care. Employment in the informal sector had fallen in recent years following the launch of a comprehensive programme to reduce informal employment, mostly as a result of the formalization of workers in the transport sector. The construction industry had the largest number of informal workers. According to the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment, the number of people receiving unemployment benefits and State expenditure on such benefits had both increased significantly between 2015 and 2021.

58. The total amount of wages in arrears had decreased over the previous year and the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment had adopted a plan to eliminate delays in the payment of wages. Notwithstanding the moratorium, national and regional labour inspectors continued to carry out systematic inspections to ensure compliance with labour laws, and data were available on the outcome of the inspections and the violations found, disaggregated by economic sector. Inspectors also followed up on complaints from citizens.

59. Social benefits were allocated using a set of indicators in order to provide targeted support to the people who needed it most. Food security had been improved through measures adopted as part of the National Development Strategy for the period up to 2030, agriculture sector reform and school meal programmes. The latter had been expanded to cover more secondary schools.

60. In 2021, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions and its partner organizations had concluded a series of collective bargaining agreements, including such issues as the payment of wage arrears, with government ministries and authorities and local businesses.

Women were well represented in leadership roles in the Government and various trade unions, as well as in general membership of the latter.

61. **Mr. Ashuriyon** (Tajikistan) said that the Government had created an inter-agency working group tasked with developing a law on probation and other pieces of legislation to provide social assistance, benefits and medical care for former prisoners. A body had been set up to guarantee their right to housing and employment, and a special fund existed to cover the basic needs, such as for clothing, of prisoners upon release.

62. Inmates at two of the country's prisons were offered vocational training courses to provide them with qualifications that they could use to find work. Employers who refused to hire former prisoners without good reason were liable to face administrative or criminal penalties in accordance with the Labour Code. There were no legislative obstacles that prevented former prisoners from finding work; on the contrary, they were given full support. The same was true of pregnant women, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

63. **A representative of Tajikistan** said that the draft social protection strategy had been submitted and the Government was expected to approve it in October 2022. Under the strategy, a central database would be created to ensure that benefits were provided to all vulnerable groups, and additional benefits would be allocated to groups that were at risk of falling below the poverty line. The Government was working with local authorities around the country to improve transparency within the social benefits system. No complaints had been received in relation to the system. Families of children with disabilities were entitled to SM 430 in benefits, which varied on a yearly basis in line with inflation.

64. **Mr. Ashuriyon** (Tajikistan) said that certain groups of persons with disabilities were exempt from paying taxes under the current Tax Code.

65. **A representative of Tajikistan** said that provisions on employee protection under the Constitution, Labour Code and other relevant laws were enforced. The right to work and to receive labour protection, without discrimination on any grounds, was enshrined in the Constitution, and an entire chapter of the Labour Code was dedicated to the protection of workers' rights. Everyone over 15 years of age had the right to work and enjoyed the same rights as all other workers. Minors were required to undergo a medical examination every year and to provide a medical certificate to their employer. They were prohibited from working in hazardous conditions or during hours that were incompatible with their school schedule.

66. The main authority responsible for protecting workers' rights was the Federation of Independent Trade Unions, which provided training to the staff of its constituent unions and member organizations. The Federation, which was composed of various regional and sectoral unions, had over one million individual members.

67. **Mr. Windfuhr** said that he wished to know whether any statistics were available on the number of cases of workers' rights violations that had been identified by the labour inspectorate, what types of violations they were and what measures the State party had taken to address such violations. He wondered what functions were carried out by the so-called public control inspectorates that could be established by trade unions, and whether independent trade unions could be established that lacked public control inspectorates.

68. **Mr. Emuze** (Country Task Force) said that he would appreciate information about any plans to set up additional community- and family-based child support centres to prevent children from being placed in residential childcare institutions. He wondered whether a new programme for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour had been launched, since the previous programme had ended in 2020. He would be interested to hear about the situation of Tajik nationals, including women and children, who had returned from conflict zones, and any measures taken to ensure that unaccompanied returnee children were placed in family-based care rather than institutions. He would be grateful for information about the policies, measures and programmes that had been introduced to provide medical, financial, psychological and legal assistance to returnees.

69. He wondered how many schools and students were covered by the school meals programme for the period 2022–2027, what had been the costs of running the pilot programme, what share of those costs had been defrayed by the Government and what share had been borne by development partners. He would like to know whether the State party intended to overcome the challenges related to the implementation of the programme, such as the remoteness of some schools and the additional burden it would place on local communities.

70. He would be grateful for an explanation of the procedure for evictions, which were reportedly continuing despite the amendments to the Housing Code intended to prevent them. How many forced evictions had been carried out and how did they affect local communities? He would be interested to learn what the consultation process prior to eviction entailed, what adequate alternative housing was available and whether suitable amounts of compensation were paid to those evicted.

71. He wished to know when the State party's water supply and sanitation policy would be finalized and implemented, and what measures had been taken to strengthen sanitary conditions in maternity wards. Information on maternal and child mortality, and any efforts to address the issue, would be welcome. He would be keen to learn about any steps taken to combat the shortage of medical professionals, improve infrastructure and facilitate access to medical services, especially for the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups. How had the COVID-19 pandemic affected access to health-care services? He wondered what were the costs of such services, whether those costs were covered by health insurance, and how partnerships between the public and private sectors had affected the affordability of medical care.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.