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Summary record of the 3307th meeting (Chamber A)

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 18 October 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Seetulsingh (Vice-Chair)

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant
(*continued*)

Fourth periodic report of Slovakia (continued)

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In the absence of Mr. Salvioli (Chair), Mr. Seetulsingh (Vice-Chair) took the Chair.

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

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant
(continued)

Fourth periodic report of Slovakia (continued) (CCPR/C/SVK/4, CCPR/C/SVK/Q/4 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Slovakia took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Politi** asked whether judges could choose not to apply domestic legislation if it was incompatible with the provisions of the Covenant or whether, in such cases, they were obliged to obtain a declaration of incompatibility from the Constitutional Court.
3. He asked for more information on the mechanism for implementing the recommendations of the Committee and stressed that it was important to raise awareness of the provisions of the Covenant among all organs of the State, especially among the judiciary, as the greater the awareness of its provisions, the more likely they were to be implemented.
4. **The Chair** requested more information on the process by which citizens of the State party could appeal to an ombudsman if they believed that their human rights had been violated.
5. **Mr. Bouzid** asked why the submission of the draft legislation concerning the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights had been postponed by the Minister of Justice. He wished to know whether funds had been allocated to the Centre from the budget of that year and, if so, whether the amount allocated was greater or less than that allocated the previous year.
6. **Mr. Filčík** (Slovak Republic) said that the issue of the sterilization of transgender persons had been raised with the Ministry of Health, which was consulting medical professionals in order to review and update the guidelines available in that respect. Steps had been taken to provide specific training to staff tasked with helping transgender persons to undergo gender transition. It was hoped that, as a result of the measures being taken, the practice of sterilization would one day be abolished.
7. The referendum on the protection of the family held in 2015 had been an initiative not of the Government but of a non-governmental organization. After receiving the request to hold the referendum, the President had submitted the four proposed questions to the Constitutional Court, which had approved three of them. Subsequent to that decision, the Government had been unable to prevent the referendum from going ahead.
8. **Ms. Rozborová** said that, in line with international trends, the Government was taking steps to abandon the practice of isolating and segregating persons who required long-term support and care. Between 2007 and 2013, a national pilot project, aimed mainly at employees and clients of social services, had been implemented in order to begin the process of deinstitutionalization by addressing issues such as employment, the accessibility of physical environments and universal design. A national project was being prepared to support social service teams charged with implementing the new model. Every residential social services facility would be able to join the project, which was scheduled to last 72 months and would involve around 17 social service facilities per year.
9. Once the process of educating management and preparing the transformation plans had been completed, social service facilities would be ready to apply for financial support from the integrated regional operational programme and could join the planned national

project, which would ensure that staff were systematically trained in the process of moving towards community-based care. Part of the project would involve public relations and outreach activities in communities where the deinstitutionalization process was being conducted. The Ministry was also preparing other projects that involved developing social services at the community level.

10. **Ms. Waterval** asked what sanctions and compensation had been handed out in cases of ill-treatment and excessive use of force by the police; whether there was a protocol for the investigation and prosecution of racist or discriminatory conduct by law-enforcement officials; and whether alleged incidents of such conduct were investigated by an independent body. She expressed the hope that such officials were familiar with the Istanbul Protocol.

11. Referring to question 14 of the list of issues, she asked at what stage in the detention process detainees could exercise the right to access a lawyer, inform a relative, be informed of their rights and appear promptly before a judge. She wished to know what safeguards were in place for minors held in detention.

12. Turning to question 15, she asked what steps had been taken to review the policy of relying on diplomatic assurances as justification for returning foreign nationals to countries where they might be tortured or ill-treated. The State party should repeal the exceptions to non-refoulement that could be applied to persons considered to be a threat to national security or who had been sentenced for a particularly serious crime.

13. She asked for details of the human and financial resources allocated to the judiciary and wished to know more about the steps taken to stabilize and modernize that body. Lastly, she asked for information on the impact of the Act on the Criminal Liability of Legal Entities, which had entered into force in July 2016.

14. **Mr. Bouzid** asked for details of the maximum and minimum periods during which a person could be held in pretrial detention, particularly in cases involving accusations of terrorist activity. Would the Government consider reviewing or reducing pretrial detention periods? He asked why the sentence of house arrest was rarely handed down, despite the fact that it was available under Slovak law and could serve a useful means of alleviating overcrowding in prisons.

15. Noting that four different bodies were able to pay visits to places of detention, he asked whether such visits could be made at short notice and whether the bodies in question could receive and follow up on complaints from detainees.

16. He asked what measures were in place to provide advice and care to victims of human trafficking; what steps were being taken to bring the perpetrators of that crime to justice; whether victims could be cared for in shelters as well as medical facilities; whether assistance was provided to Slovak victims of human trafficking who lived in other countries; and what the outcome of the 2011-2014 programme for fighting against human trafficking had been. He requested statistical information on the punishments handed down to perpetrators of human trafficking and on the compensation and redress provided to victims. He was concerned to note that, according to information provided by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, very few investigations into human trafficking took place. Lastly, noting that information on the work of the Slovak Centre for the Fight Against Trafficking and Crime had been provided for the period up to 2013, he asked whether any information for 2016 was available.

17. Although much had been done to tackle the practice of corporal punishment, the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights had confirmed that such punishment was repeatedly used against children. Was the State party planning to adopt legislation to

prohibit corporal punishment and, if so, would children be allowed to testify before the courts in cases involving that practice?

18. **Mr. Fathalla** said that, in relation to the treatment of aliens, refugees and asylum seekers, the delegation might supply details of how many families with minor children had been detained and for how long, since that information was not contained in the State party's report. The Committee was grateful for the information on the conditions of detention facilities and on the services provided, and would be interested to learn whether the two facilities mentioned in the replies provided sufficient capacity. It would also appreciate some indication of whether there were any alternatives to detention, as prescribed in section 89 of the Act on Residence of Foreigners, along with relevant statistics.

19. The Committee welcomed the 2011 amendment introducing more favourable treatment for family reunification requests made by persons under international protection, but was concerned that the three-month time limit for such requests might make it impossible for refugees to gather the necessary documentation. How did the State party intend to address that issue? Lastly, the replies of Slovakia to the list of issues had not included data on unaccompanied minors that had disappeared or escaped from orphanages or foster homes. In addition to providing those figures, the delegation should describe what steps had been taken to find the minors in question, and the outcome of those efforts.

20. **Mr. Politi**, recalling that the State party had prohibited compulsory military service, thus recognizing the right of individuals to exercise conscientious objection, said that, despite the assurances given, the State party had failed to shed light on whether conscientious objection was respected in cases where it had arisen during the actual performance of military service. Clarification was required in terms of whether any such requests had been made, and how such requests had been treated by the administrative and judicial authorities.

21. **Ms. Jelić** said that it was important that persons belonging to national ethnic minorities should take part in decision-making processes at all levels. In that regard, she would be interested to learn how members of the Committee for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups were elected and how the transparency of that process was ensured. While the State party was to be commended for establishing a Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities, additional clarification was needed regarding the main challenges and concrete achievements of that institution, especially in view of the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities to the effect that the State party should increase attention to minority rights as an integral part of human rights, in close consultation with national minority and civil society representatives.

22. Concerning article 25 of the Covenant, she welcomed the statistics provided and information that two of the country's seats in the European Parliament were held by deputies belonging to national minorities. Similarly, it would be useful to learn how many national minority members held government office, and what functions they performed. She would also welcome an explanation of how Slovakia ensured participation in decision-making processes at the local level, which was important for the fulfilment of the State party's obligations under the Covenant and under article 15 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Furthermore, and recalling the resolution adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 April 2016, which had recommended that the Slovak Republic should intensify efforts to effectively protect Roma from racial discrimination in all spheres of life, the State party should explain what practical measures it had taken to address discrimination against Roma in the education system and to prevent the placement of Roma children in special needs classes or schools.

23. In the light of the reports and concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and reports from Slovak civil society organizations, according to which certain practices in Slovakia were contrary to the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO), she asked the delegation what had been done to protect free and equal access to reproductive health care and to protect privacy during childbirth and postnatal mother and childcare. Moreover, she would like to know whether the State party was taking steps to address the prohibitively high cost of abortion.

24. **The Chair** said that he would be grateful if, in its response, the delegation would draw the Committee's attention to any figures that might already be contained in the annex to the replies to the list of issues. Any additional information submitted by the delegation in the 48 hours after the meeting should be concise and relevant to the issues raised.

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.

25. **Mr. Filčík** (Slovakia), responding to the question on the direct application of international instruments by domestic courts, said that while matters concerning the constitutionality of the law must be referred to the Constitutional Court, the provisions in relation to non-compliance with international agreements were less clear. Nevertheless, in theory it was possible for courts to apply international instruments directly, and a domestic court had recently done so in a case pertaining to the documents and education certificates of transgender people.

26. In response to the question on the powers of the ombudsman, he said that the ombudsman's office was one of few institutions with the right to petition the Constitutional Court in cases where the constitutionality of a legal act was called into question. Any individual who believed that his rights had been infringed could contact the ombudsman, who could then act on that person's behalf and represent him or her before the courts.

27. In response to Ms. Jelić's question in the previous meeting, he said that there had been a total of 24 convictions for hate crimes in 2015. Regarding Mr. Bouzid's question following the change of Government in March 2016, the Ministry of Justice had been contacted by human rights organizations, who had proposed the creation of an independent committee for human rights education under the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights. Consequently, the Ministry had decided to postpone the relevant legislation for six months, in order to explore the viability of that option. The State budget did not make specific provision for the National Centre, which was financed from the Ministry of Finance grants.

28. **Mr. Becler** (Slovakia) said that crimes committed by the police force, including racially motivated crimes, were investigated by an independent body of the Ministry of Interior, under the constant supervision of the prosecutor. The statistical data did not show whether the crimes committed were motivated by race; however, it was known that 53 crimes had been committed in 2015 in which public office had been abused, including 6 crimes involving the use of excessive force.

29. **Mr. Valuch** (Slovakia), responding to the question on basic rights and their application with respect to detainees and prisoners, said that individuals were given a written leaflet informing them of their rights and obligations upon admission to the detention facility. Any statements to the effect that violence had been used against detainees were recorded, and medical examinations were carried out to establish whether they had been submitted to force or to cruel treatment. There was no time limit for the filing of complaints of ill-treatment, and all detainees, including minors, could address written complaints to the director of the facility, the supervising prosecutor or other bodies, by means of a locked box that could not be accessed by security personnel. Health care was provided throughout the detention, beginning with the examination upon admission. By

virtue of their age, minors were subject to a slightly less strict regime in terms of the frequency of visits, clothing and the size of their cells.

30. **Mr. Hambalek** (Slovakia), responding to Ms. Waterval's question on non-refoulement, said that there were administrative obstacles to the expulsion of aliens from Slovakia. In 2013, a legally binding methodology had been prepared that the police were obliged to follow in such cases. The police could not expel stateless persons whose country of origin or of last residence could not be determined. The procedure also took into account statements from the court-appointed legal guardians of alien minors, as well as any available written assessments of the internal political situation of certain countries. An investigation was mandatory and the police had to prove that there were no obstacles to the return of citizens to their country of origin.

31. **Mr. Filčík** (Slovakia), responding to the question on the resources of the judiciary, said that the judicial system had been allocated a budget of 179 million euros in 2016, which was set to increase by 17 million euros in 2017; its human resources included 1,347 judges, 4,000 other staff and 672 auxiliary staff.

32. **Mr. Valuch** (Slovakia) said that statistical data on the reduction in the number of accused persons in custody, the impact of the changes made to the criminal penalty regime and that of shortening suspended prison sentences could be found in paragraph 79 of the country's written replies. Act No. 78/2015 Coll., which had entered into force on 1 January 2016, recommended the imposition of alternative sentences and introduced the possibility for convicted persons who fulfilled certain criteria to serve the remainder of their prison sentence under house arrest. However, it was for a judge to decide whether to grant that concession. Although some 300 convicted persons had been found eligible to serve the remainder of their prison sentence under house arrest, for unknown reasons the vast majority had chosen not to avail themselves of that option, preferring to serve the remainder of their sentence in prison. In some cases, convicted persons could be released on parole.

33. **Mr. Domanický** (Slovakia) said that the issue of human trafficking was addressed through the National Programme to Combat Human Trafficking for the period 2015-2018 and through programmes to protect and assist victims. A number of government institutions were involved in the fight against human trafficking, such as the Information Centre for Combating Human Trafficking and the Prevention of Criminality, as well as an inter-institutional group of experts and a multidisciplinary working group. The national unit for combating illegal migration, which was part of the Bureau of Border and Alien Police, was responsible for investigating and dealing with cases of human trafficking. Around 100 police officers had assigned functions related to human trafficking. Since assuming primary responsibility for handling such cases, the national unit for combating illegal migration had achieved considerable progress in the area of investigation. Slovakia remained a source and transit country for human trafficking. The main destination countries of persons trafficked from Slovakia included the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy. Over the previous three years, the number of human trafficking cases prosecuted by the courts had risen, with female victims tending to outnumber male victims. The most common forms of trafficking in Slovakia included trafficking for the purposes of forced labour, sexual exploitation, forced marriage and begging.

34. The main aim of the programmes to protect and assist victims of human trafficking, which were organized and run by various government ministries and institutions, international NGOs and civil society organizations, was to safeguard their fundamental rights and preserve their dignity. Only persons judged to be victims of human trafficking could access the services provided under the programmes. Participation in the programmes was voluntary and victims were not required to cooperate with police investigators. The services provided under the programmes included assisted return, immediate crisis care and reintegration support. An individual care plan was drawn up for each victim and steps were

taken to dissuade victims from renewing contact with their traffickers. Slovak citizens who were victims of human trafficking were entitled to anonymous accommodation, social assistance, legal advice, medical and psychological care and training opportunities upon their return to Slovakia. Victims who decided to cooperate with police investigators could be enrolled in a witness protection scheme if necessary. In certain cases, victims of human trafficking could claim financial compensation. Access to the services provided under the programmes could be restricted if a beneficiary was found to have falsely claimed to be a victim of human trafficking or to have renewed contact with his or her suspected trafficker or assisted his or her trafficker in conducting unlawful activities.

35. **Ms. Rozborová** (Slovakia) said that the delegation would submit written replies to the questions posed on the corporal punishment of children within 48 hours. If an unaccompanied minor was found to have left the care institution in which he or she had been placed by the courts without authorization, the manager of that institution was obliged to report his or her unauthorized departure to the police without delay in order for a search to be launched. If the unaccompanied minor in question was an asylum applicant, the manager of the care institution must also report his or her unauthorized departure to the Ministry of the Interior and to his or her appointed guardian. It should be recalled that such care institutions were intended as a substitute for a family environment and so unaccompanied minors could not be forced to remain on the premises. There were no plans to change that policy. The majority of unaccompanied minors who ran away from care institutions often did so within a few days of having arrived and without warning, which made it difficult to ascertain their whereabouts. However, unaccompanied minors in that situation should not automatically be considered missing or to have disappeared, as there was a robust reporting procedure in place and a recent legislative amendment had introduced more effective measures for dealing with unaccompanied minors whose whereabouts were unknown. The Government was working with a research institute specializing in family affairs to determine the reasons why unaccompanied minors ran away from care institutions with a view to adopting targeted preventive and corrective measures.

36. **Mr. Hambalek** (Slovakia) said that families with children could be placed in detention facilities for foreign nationals if they had entered and/or remained in the country unlawfully or were not in possession of identity documents, but only as a last resort. There were two such detention facilities in Slovakia, one of which was reserved for families with children. In cases where it was clear that the parents of the child would not be able to meet his or her basic needs, placing the family in such a facility was deemed to be in the child's best interests. Children residing there had access to a dedicated play area and were given the opportunity to participate in sporting and leisure activities. It was not possible to specify the exact number of families with children concerned, as children were sometimes accompanied by family members other than their parents, or a by legal guardian. A large number of children had been placed in such facilities as a result of the massive influx of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers into Europe in 2015, many of whom were not entitled to remain in Slovakia. On that occasion, it had proven necessary to place families with children in the other detention facility for foreign nationals as a temporary measure, as the capacity of the facility reserved for them had been momentarily exceeded. The applicable guidelines had been strictly adhered to in that case. The delegation would provide the Committee with further statistical information in that respect within 48 hours.

37. **Mr. Kollár** (Slovakia) said that compulsory military service had been abolished in Slovakia in 2006 and that the country's armed forces comprised only professional military personnel. Under normal circumstances, military personnel were free to leave the armed forces whenever they wished. However, Slovak citizens could still be subject to conscription in times of emergency or war. To avoid having to perform military service,

citizens must make a statement of objection during peacetime. Slovak citizens who did so were called upon to perform an alternative service.

38. **Ms. Ondrášová** (Slovakia) said that the admission of children with special educational needs to a special school or a special class within a mainstream school was not automatic; rather it was decided on by the head teacher of the school concerned following the submission of a written request from the child's parent or guardian and a recommendation from an educational counsellor based on a diagnosis of the condition or impairment giving rise to those needs. The School Act had been amended to draw a clearer distinction between special educational needs arising from a physical or mental impairment and those arising exclusively from social disadvantage, as the former remained the decisive criterion for a child being placed in a special school or special class within a mainstream school. Under the amended School Act, a child whose special educational needs were exclusively attributable to a socially deprived background could not be admitted to a special school or a special class within a mainstream school. Moreover, as of 1 September 2016, children from socially deprived backgrounds could only claim a maintenance allowance if they attended a mainstream class. Targeted measures were being taken to improve the situation of such children, which included Roma children, within the mainstream education system. In addition, the State School Inspectorate had begun to exercise greater oversight over the procedures used to diagnose the condition or impairment giving rise to special educational needs and applications for admission to special schools or classes.

39. In response to a question about what was being done to address prejudice against the Roma, she said that, in the education sector, efforts had been made for more than 10 years to incorporate human rights education into the national curriculum from preschool to further education levels. Furthermore, under the School Act multicultural education had been made compulsory. There was a Ministry of Education committee responsible for human rights education that reported to the Government on various human rights issues, including minority rights. Textbooks could not be approved unless they complied with certain human rights standards. Comprehensive inspections of State schools monitored extremism and radicalism and related reports were available on public websites.

40. **Mr. Hero** (Slovakia), providing additional information on court cases involving the forced sterilization of Roma women, said that in 2016, a district court in Košice had awarded almost 17,000 euros compensation to a Roma woman who had undergone such a procedure in 1999 following the complicated birth of her second child. The woman had originally sought a public apology and claimed compensation before a district court in 2005, but her case had been dismissed. However, in 2009, the Constitutional Court had found that the district court had violated the woman's right to a fair trial and had returned the case to the district court. In 2011, the court had decided that the woman's rights had indeed been violated, but had awarded only 1,500 euros compensation. She had appealed that decision and, in 2013, the regional court had deemed that the amount of compensation was inadequate and referred to a European Court of Human Rights decision that recommended 31,000 euros as an appropriate amount. The hospital responsible for the procedure had claimed that the sterilization had been performed because the woman's life had been at risk. Nevertheless, in its final ruling, the district court had confirmed that sterilization was never, under any circumstances, a life-saving intervention and could not be performed without a patient's informed consent. The fact that the sterilization had been performed upon the woman at the age of only 24 had negatively impacted her whole family life and psyche.

41. Explaining measures and policies adopted to prevent anti-Roma sentiment in Slovakia, he said that training courses to combat discrimination had been organized for police officers, judges and lawyers in cooperation with the Council of Europe. A national seminar for journalists would be held shortly to promote ethical reporting about the Roma minority. The Strategy for Roma Community Integration by 2020 had two main objectives:

to improve coordination and exchange of information between the entities involved in implementing the Strategy, and to raise awareness of the multicultural nature of Slovak society and eliminate the negative portrayal of the Roma way of life. To that end a platform would be set up for sharing information about projects and best practices; a working group would be established to raise public awareness, and a situational analysis would be conducted. In the longer term, education and communication campaigns would be launched to ensure the inclusive treatment of minorities by relevant professionals and the media.

42. As to the participation of the Roma minority in decision-making processes, work had commenced on the establishment of a national platform to ensure the involvement of all partners in the implementation of the Strategy for Roma Community Integration by 2020. Representatives of the Roma community would thus have the opportunity to participate in drafting action plans and other activities. It was also hoped to encourage the involvement of Roma youth through the establishment of a youth platform. Since anti-Roma sentiment was a problem felt throughout Europe, during its presidency of the Council of the European Union Slovakia was drawing attention to the matter when relevant resolutions were drafted.

43. **Ms. Ondrášová** (Slovakia) said that one of the objectives of the education sector was to implement the European Charter for Regional and/or Minority Languages. There were currently nine minority languages recognized in Slovakia, at least five of which were taught in schools.

44. **Mr. Valuch** (Slovakia) said that unannounced visits to persons deprived of their liberty could be made only by the ombudsman, the Commissioner for Children, the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities or a prosecutor. Although visits by those officials were governed by specific sets of regulations, they did have certain common criteria, such as the right for each to speak to the detainee without a third party present. Visits to facilities and investigations could also be conducted by the ombudsman and the Commissioners in response to requests by persons held in such facilities. Prosecutors visited prisons and detention facilities at least once every three months upon the instructions of the Prosecutor General; in the last two years 126 such visits had taken place.

45. **Ms. Rozborová** (Slovakia) said she assumed that the Committee's concerns about the right to privacy during childbirth had been prompted by a recent NGO publication containing the results of a study on health-care services during pregnancy and childbirth in Slovakia. The results were very subjective and not representative, since the average number of deliveries per year stood at around 50,000, whereas the study covered only 15 women who had close links with a movement promoting home births, which were prohibited under Slovak law. Obstetric services in Slovakia were undergoing long-term reform to make childbirth more mother and child friendly, while guaranteeing high standards of professional medical care; however, the need for the greater comfort of the mother and improved delivery facilities had to be balanced against the newborn child's right to health. The Government did not monitor the use of anaesthesia during childbirth and was thus not aware of any problems in that area.

46. Abortions were subsidized by the public health insurance scheme if prescribed on medical grounds. The final decision regarding such medical grounds was taken by the head of the gynaecology and obstetrics department in the health facility concerned. Abortion was available to women on request, which in the case of minors must be filed through a lawyer. If it was suspected that the pregnancy was the result of rape, the health facility would file the request so that the costs were covered by the public health insurance scheme. Since over-the-counter emergency contraception was available in Slovakia, recent rape victims were informed of that option. Approximately 15 per cent of abortions were performed on medical grounds and covered by the public health insurance scheme. The costs of abortion could also be defrayed by private insurance schemes. The average cost of an abortion was 200 euros.

47. **Mr. Rodríguez Rescia** asked how the State party envisaged resolving the problem of the failure to appoint new members to the Constitutional Court. In order to guarantee the independence of the judiciary it was important for the executive to deal with the situation, which had remained unchanged for two years.

48. **The Chair** invited the delegation to submit its replies to the question by Mr. Rodríguez Rescia and any other outstanding questions in writing to the Committee within 48 hours.

49. **Mr. Rosocha** (Slovakia) said that the delegation had welcomed the dialogue with the Committee as an opportunity to discuss best practices for the improved implementation of the Covenant. It had participated with an open mind about providing information and receiving feedback. The delegation had appreciated the valuable comments of Committee members as well as the input from NGOs. It looked forward to cooperating with the Committee in future, to receiving its concluding observations on the report and to adopting further measures in application of the Covenant, as necessary.

50. **The Chair** said that the very constructive dialogue with the delegation had highlighted the considerable progress made by the State party in the area of human rights, including the forthcoming ratification of the Istanbul Convention, greater tolerance towards the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community and the drafting of legislation relating to victims. However, one area where improvement was required was the allocation of the necessary funding to the National Human Rights Centre so that it could be accredited with A status by the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. The persistent problem of the sterilization of transgender persons also required attention. Since Slovenia currently held the presidency of the Council of the European Union, it should also take the lead in implementing reforms in that area. The Committee looked forward to receiving the additional written information from the State party and hoped that it would follow up on the Committee's concluding observations and recommendations. Thanks were also due to the NGOs for their useful contribution to the consideration of the State party's report.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.