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Summary record of the 15th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 26 February 2020, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Zerbini Ribeiro Leão

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports *(continued)*

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

Sixth periodic report of Norway (continued)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Norway took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Skarstein** (Norway), responding to questions raised by the Chairperson at the previous meeting, said that section 3-3 (c) of the Accounting Act obliged large companies to report on the measures they had taken to promote equality and prevent discrimination. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act also obliged employers to undertake active, targeted and systematic efforts to promote equality and prevent discrimination in the areas of recruitment, pay and working conditions, promotion, development opportunities, individual accommodation and opportunities to combine work with family life. A study from 2019 had concluded that the duty to report on corporate social responsibility, in accordance with the Accounting Act, had had a small impact overall since its introduction in 2013. A commission appointed by the Government in 2018 to consider whether companies should be required to submit information about issues concerning social responsibility and global supply chains had made a number of proposals, which were being considered. In November 2019, the Government had presented a new statement on its direct ownership in companies, which had established its expectations with regard to sustainability and corporate responsibility, including identifying and managing the risks that the company imposed on people, society and the environment, in accordance with internationally recognized policies, principles and conventions.

3. **Mr. Drægri** (Norway) said that in 2011 the Government had set aside coastal fishing quotas for fishermen and vessels in the coastal communities of the counties of Finnmark and Troms and in some areas in the county of Nordland, as part of an agreement with the Sámi Parliament. The individual vessel quota, which was guaranteed for vessels registered in Sámi areas, was currently set at seven tonnes of cod, which was in addition to the maximum quota for vessels in the open access group.

4. **Mr. Jølstad** (Norway) said that the State party did not have specific statistics on the gender pay gap for immigrants and disabled persons, but it did have general wage statistics for immigrants. Approximately 66.6 per cent of all immigrant residents between the ages of 20 and 66 were employed in the fourth quarter of 2018, while the employment rate for the same age group in the rest of the population was 78.5 per cent. The employment rate for immigrants from the European Economic Area was higher than for other groups. Immigrants from Asia and Africa had employment rates of 58 and 51 per cent, respectively. Among them, 35 per cent were employed in sales and services, areas in which there was less need for higher education; the corresponding figure for the general population was 20 per cent. In general, the gender pay gap was lower for workers in occupations requiring less skills.

5. In 2018, the employment rate for disabled persons between the ages of 15 and 66 had been 44 per cent, compared with 74 per cent for the population as a whole. The employment rate for disabled persons increased in accordance with their educational level, as it did for the rest of the population; 30 per cent of employed disabled persons had higher levels of education, in comparison with 40 per cent of the employed population as a whole.

6. The right to organize and engage in collective bargaining was supported by legislation, and there were no legal restrictions on who could form and join unions and organizations. Interference by the authorities in the constitutions and rules of trade unions and organizations and their activities was not permitted. The right to undertake industrial action was part of the right to free collective bargaining, except for members of the armed forces and senior civil servants, and there was no prohibition on strikes or lockouts. There was, however, broad consensus that the Government had a responsibility to prevent labour conflicts from endangering life, personal safety and health, and vital public interests. In such cases, disputes must be resolved by the State Wages Board in compulsory arbitration.

An example of such an intervention had occurred in 2012, when the Government had intervened in a labour dispute in the oil sector, based on the reasoning that even a short interruption of all oil and gas production would have been highly detrimental to trust in Norway as a credible supplier of oil and gas and would have had a serious impact on the national economy and the supplier industry. Following that intervention, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Committee on Freedom of Association had urged Norway to refrain from resorting to legislation imposing compulsory arbitration and to consider the possibility of introducing a minimum service in the oil and gas sector in the event of industrial action. In a case in 2014 that had concerned collective bargaining settlements with laundry personnel and cleaners supplying hospitals with clothes and bedding, which was considered to represent a threat to patient safety and therefore to public health life and life, ILO had renewed its encouragement to introduce a means of establishing a minimum service.

7. Two of the four main confederations of employees in the State party were currently led by women. Trade unions had provisions on gender equality, including the stipulation that each gender should have at least 40 per cent representation, where possible, in elections and appointments in the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions.

8. Several components of the new pension system contributed to equal pension outcomes for men and women, despite unequal work participation. They included social security ceilings, guaranteed minimum pensions, progressive taxation of pension income, and pension earning on the basis of social security benefits, child credits or survivor benefits.

9. **Ms. Drazdiak** (Norway) said that, in 2020, the average prison population was 3,000 prisoners; 205 of them, or approximately 7 per cent, were women, some 50 of whom were in pretrial detention. In principle, female and male prisoners spent the same proportion of time on daytime activities. Currently, there were women prisoners in 10 different prisons, some of which were exclusively female. However, the very low number of female prisoners and the principle of proximity, whereby prisoners should serve their sentences near their families, presented a challenge to the objective of ensuring that imprisoned women had equitable access to work training. Nonetheless, the Directorate of Correctional Services was implementing a five-point strategy and developing the prison infrastructure to that end.

10. **Ms. Skarstein** (Norway) said that, on 1 January 2018, the handling of complaints in discrimination cases had been transferred to the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal, which had been given the power to grant redress in discrimination cases related to working life and compensation in simple cases. In 2019, 84 of the 288 cases that had been decided by the Tribunal had concerned working life. In 40 of those cases, the Tribunal had decided that there had been a violation of the law, and it had awarded redress or compensation in one case. Of those cases, 144 complaints had been filed by men and 113 by women. On 1 January 2020, the Tribunal had also been given the authority to handle complaints about sexual harassment and to award redress in sexual harassment cases within working life.

11. **Ms. Espinoza** (Norway) said that, since 1 July 2018, working parents had been entitled to paid leave when they adopted or gave birth to a child. The benefit period was divided into three equal parts after birth, with one third going to the mother, one third to the father and one third to be shared between them. It was too early to tell how the benefits period was being shared by parents, but recently published statistics showed that fathers had increased their use of the shared parental benefit period from 20 per cent in 2018 to 25.6 per cent in 2019. About 90 per cent of fathers used part of or all the weeks that were reserved for them.

12. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act provided robust protection against discrimination for pregnant women and parents who made use of their right to parental leave. Parents' rights included the entitlement to return to the same or a corresponding position after having been on leave, and to benefit from improvements in working conditions to which the worker would otherwise have been entitled to during his or her absence. Of the 288 complaint cases decided by the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal in 2019, 12 had concerned discrimination related to parental leave.

13. **Ms. Bolstad** (Norway) said that the Government provided care for all unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in accordance with their age. The standards of its

reception facilities were satisfactory and the Government had no intention of transferring responsibility for all unaccompanied minors to the Child Welfare Service.

14. If a child living in a Child Welfare Service centre turned 15 years, he or she could stay in the centre until his or her settlement in a municipality. Children in reception centres or departments for unaccompanied minors who turned 18 years would generally be moved to an adult department, preferably at the same reception centre.

15. Unaccompanied minors were given priority at all stages of the asylum procedure. The median waiting period for the first asylum decision for unaccompanied minors was 2.1 months and, in 2019, about 90 per cent of minors were granted an ordinary residence permit. The median waiting time in reception centres for unaccompanied minors over the age of 15 was 3.2 months as at January 2020.

16. Regardless of residency status, all children in Norway had the right to the necessary health-care services, including mental health services when needed. However, there were challenges associated with the timely identification and provision of services to minors with mental health disorders. All staff working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in reception centres were provided with training in mental health, and reception centres had systems in place to identify asylum-seeking children with vulnerabilities.

17. **Ms. Geving** (Norway) said that the Child Welfare Act applied to asylum-seeking children in Norway regardless of their ethnic background, residency status or citizenship. If the Child Welfare Service received a report of concern regarding the well-being of a child or asylum-seeking minor over 15 years of age, it would assess the child's need for help in a timely manner and in the same way it would for all children.

18. The Child Welfare Act stressed that children should grow up with their parents. Therefore, the Child Welfare Service was aimed at helping families function better. According to recent statistics, 39,000 children were recipients of measures by the Service, 61 per cent of which were assistive measures in the home, such as financial aid or parental guidance; 26 per cent were care orders; and the rest were predominantly voluntary placements in foster homes.

19. Concerning the over-representation of families of low socioeconomic status in the child protection system, in order for a care order to be issued, the child must be suffering severe neglect, violence or abuse; voluntary assistance measures must be deemed insufficient; and the issuance of a care order must be deemed to be in the best interest of the child. Placing a child in alternative care without the consent of the parents was always a measure of last resort, and parents could receive help and assistance in order to be reunited with the child.

20. Alternative care should be chosen based on the child's distinctive characteristics, and due account should be taken of the need for continuity in the child's upbringing and cultural, religious and linguistic background. Municipalities were under a legal obligation to search for a suitable foster home within the child's extended family and network, and, according to recent figures, they were successful in doing so in approximately one in four cases. Often, however, finding a foster home that adequately reflected the child's background was a challenge. Placements were monitored by the municipal authorities on an ongoing basis, under the supervision of county governors and the guidance of the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs. In 2018, a Government-appointed expert committee had produced a report on childcare that, together with a recent white paper on foster homes, formed the basis for development of a new foster home strategy and an improved programme of training and support for foster parents.

21. In parallel with those efforts, in 2019 the Government had embarked on a drive to improve coordination between child welfare services and mental health services, a survey having revealed that around three quarters of children in care had mental health issues. The responsible agencies were developing guidelines to ensure that children in care were assessed for mental health and drug problems at an early stage, so that an appropriate care plan could be promptly drawn up and implemented. To further increase the chances of positive outcomes, child welfare officers were being placed in psychiatry clinics and all child welfare institutions were required to have a dedicated health-care contact person. In addition, two new facilities that would provide both long-term care and highly specialized mental health services were under development.

22. **Mr. Drægri** (Norway) said that the national housing support strategy for the period 2014–2020 was intended to secure adequate housing for all persons in need, and progress to that end had already been made. The 2012 survey of homelessness had identified close to 6,300 persons, including 679 children, who met the definition of homeless, which encompassed persons living in temporary and unstable accommodation, as well as rough sleepers; by the time of the 2016 survey, that number had fallen to 3,900, including 229 children. The next survey would be conducted in November 2020 and the figures would be available in June 2021. On a less positive note, the number of long-term homeless had increased and, since many of those persons were affected by substance abuse or mental health issues or both, municipal authorities were turning to innovative service models, such as flexible assertive community treatment (FACT) and the “Housing First” approach. The Norwegian State Housing Bank assisted the municipalities in that work, providing grants, loans and guidance. Detailed data on the social housing stock, waiting lists, applications and other housing-related indicators could be provided to the Committee in writing.

23. **Ms. Skarstein** (Norway) said that 8 of the 288 cases brought before the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Tribunal in 2019 had been related to housing. Various measures to address discrimination in housing matters were included in the Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the grounds of Ethnicity and Religion that had been adopted in December 2019.

24. **Mr. Uchermann** (Norway) said that, pursuant to the regulations issued in 2011 to clarify the health-care-related rights of persons without a permanent residence in Norway, all persons staying or living in the country, irrespective of their nationality or status, were entitled to emergency treatment and any other treatment that could not be postponed without risk to life or the possibility of permanent damage or disability. Mental health services were available without charge to persons who were psychologically unstable and represented an imminent danger to themselves or to others. As a general rule, persons present in the country either illegally or for a short visit only were required to pay for their treatment. However, emergency and essential treatment could not be withheld or postponed subject to receipt of advance payment.

25. The Government believed that it was justified in restricting access to State-funded health services so long as a minimum level of service was guaranteed for all. However, although persons present in Norway illegally or on a short-term basis were not entitled to be placed on general practitioners’ lists, municipal authorities had a duty to ensure that general medical services, including regular developmental check-ups for children, were accessible to all those in need of them, and to make the arrangements necessary to that end. Furthermore, general practitioners were required to set aside time within their regular surgery hours to receive patients not on their lists. European Union citizens not in possession of a European Health Insurance Card had the same rights as non-EU citizens. If they wished to avail themselves of Norwegian health services other than emergency or essential care without charge and were entitled to cover under EU agreements, they must apply for a card in their country of origin, since only their national health authority was in a position to determine their eligibility for cover.

26. **Mr. Drægri** (Norway) said that the recent local government reforms had reduced the number of municipalities and counties and had involved the decentralization of certain State services, the aim being to ensure financially robust, more powerful municipalities with sustainable services, stronger communities and greater local democracy. In the 12 municipalities located within the Sámi region, residents had the right to request and receive services in the local Sámi language. In order to implement the regulations related to the use of the three Sámi languages and the development and preservation of Sámi culture, the municipalities and regional authorities received financial and practical support from the Sámi Parliament, which in turn received funding from the central Government.

27. Initiatives to support the country’s Roma population included the City of Oslo’s “Roma guides” scheme, designed to improve learning outcomes, reduce absenteeism and increase Roma pupils’ chances of completing their education. The programme, which entailed placing guides – currently one coordinator, three teachers and three teaching assistants with a Roma background – in schools with large Roma intakes, had already enhanced communication between schools and Roma families. The Government had increased funding for the programme in the 2019 State budget. The Roma Culture and Research Centre in Oslo, which had opened in January 2018, was another important facility

for the Roma community, providing a space where Roma children could play and receive help with homework from the school guides.

28. **Mr. Vinje** (Norway) said that the promotion and preservation of art and culture were a central element of the ongoing administrative reforms, which entailed delegating many services to the regional and municipal authorities. The central Government would ensure that the relevant funding was available for the decentralized services and the cultural institutions that provided them, and it would also retain responsibility for ensuring equal access to cultural opportunities throughout the country. The Ministry of Culture was in regular contact with the Sámi parliament, holding formal meetings every six months and informal meetings on ad hoc basis to review specific projects, such as the construction of the new Sámi National Theatre building. The Ministry was also consulting the Sámi parliament on the content of a new white paper on museum policy that would be presented to the national parliament in 2021.

29. **Ms. Skoklefeld** (Norway) said that the administrative reforms had not had major implications for the funding of education. Increased efficiency and better coordination had been the main aims. After the reforms, as before, preschool, primary and lower secondary education were funded by the municipalities, while upper secondary schools were funded by the regions. Responsibility for procuring and maintaining school buildings and infrastructure was similarly divided. Disparities between regions and municipalities undeniably existed, but additional State funding was available for those facing particular challenges. For example, schools in remote rural areas received extra support to help them recruit and retain sufficient qualified teachers. The central Government retained overall responsibility for educational policy and curriculum development.

30. Teaching skills were monitored by the regional authorities, and parents had the opportunity to raise concerns should they be dissatisfied with the education imparted to their children. A new curriculum, due to be adopted in the course of 2020, was the fruit of broad consultations with teachers and their representative bodies, pupils, parents and student organizations. The Ministry of Education met with the Sámi parliament on a regular basis, both formally and informally, and especially whenever a new law or major reform was introduced. Under the current Education Act, all children living in Sámi districts had the right to education in the Sámi language that encompassed Sámi culture, identity and society. Children in other districts also had that right, provided they constituted a group of at least 10 pupils. Sámi culture and society were also covered in the mainstream Norwegian curriculum.

31. Children of asylum-seeking parents did not have an automatic right to a kindergarten place but could be admitted at the discretion of the municipality in question if places were available. Once their families had a permanent address in Norway, they had the same rights as Norwegian children. Privately run kindergartens were required to comply with all legislation, regulations and guidelines applicable to their public sector counterparts, including regulations related to staff qualifications, buildings and infrastructure.

32. **Mr. De Schutter**, noting that the Government Pension Fund Global was the largest sovereign wealth fund in the world, controlling around 1.4 per cent of all stock holdings, said that the Committee had continuing concerns about some of the fund's investment choices, which included the multinational company, Caterpillar, whose bulldozers had been used to demolish buildings and homes in the occupied Palestinian territory, the Heidelberg Cement Group, which was involved in quarrying activities in the occupied territory, and five Israeli banks that helped to finance settlements in the territory. The International Court of Justice had clearly stated that all States had a duty to contribute to efforts to end the serious violations of the peremptory norms of international law, which included the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people. That duty was also set out in the Committee's general comment No. 24 on State obligations in the context of business activities ([E/C.12/GC/24](#)). He would like to know whether the pension fund's investments would be reviewed in the light of those obligations.

33. Referring to the case brought by Greenpeace Nordic Association and Nature and Youth against the Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy in connection with licences for offshore oil and gas extraction, which was now before the Supreme Court, he asked whether the State party accepted that its oil and gas exporting activities had had, and continued to have, an impact on global warming. Furthermore, insofar as the State party's

human rights obligations should be a central consideration in its natural resource exploitation and export policies, he wished to know whether it would be re-examining its position in the aforementioned case and in its extraction activities more generally.

34. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim** said that, according to the State party's core document (HRI/CORE/NOR/2017), budgets for various types of social expenditure had increased regularly between 2012 and 2016. The document put forward statistics in absolute terms, but when expenditure was compared to gross domestic product, the picture was not so positive. He noted that the State party was obliged to take steps to the maximum of its available resources to achieve the full realization of the rights recognized in the Covenant.

35. The information in the periodic report on the allocation by the State party of its official development assistance, provided in response to paragraph 11 of the list of issues, was lacking in detail, particularly with regard to the quality and effectiveness of such assistance. There was a need, when the State party provided information on international cooperation, to ensure linkage between article 2 (1) of the Covenant, on international assistance, and article 6 (2), which addressed economic development.

36. **Ms. Liebenberg** said that the Committee had been informed that the Government had previously issued an instruction requiring a review of the possible impact on human rights of draft legislation and policies that were under consideration, but that in 2016 that instruction had been downgraded and had been replaced by guidelines. Had the Government assessed the effect of the downgrading?

37. She understood that the State party's opposition to ratification of the Optional Protocol had been based on the perception that the rights in the Covenant were vague, which was a barrier to justiciability. In all international human rights instruments, rights were expressed in broad and open terms, which were subsequently developed through reasonable interpretation by interpretative bodies. Article 8.4 of the Optional Protocol, for example, included a standard of reasonableness. She noted that the State party had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which also covered economic and social rights, including the right of rural women to health care. It might be advisable for the State party to reconsider its opposition to ratification of the Optional Protocol.

38. **Ms. Saran**, noting that a large number of the recommendations made in the Committee's concluding observations following its consideration of the fifth periodic report of Norway had not been implemented, said that it would be advisable for the Government to set up a specific interministerial unit or mechanism to ensure follow-up to such recommendations. It would be of interest to the Committee to know how, in the absence of such a mechanism, the Government ensured coordination and coherent monitoring of follow-up to concluding observations when action was required by several ministries.

39. Regarding the National Action Plan for the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, she asked whether the Plan was applied in public procurement, whether its effectiveness had been assessed and, if so, whether information on it was made publicly available. Noting that Norway was one of the very few countries that contributed over 1 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance, she asked how decisions were made for the allocation of such aid, whether there were any conditionalities and whether any of the funds were reserved for the support of refugees within the country.

40. Both the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and civil society organizations had drawn attention to the fact that, in recent years, the Norwegian Government had issued an unprecedented number of licences for the exploration and exploitation of petroleum and natural gas reserves in the Arctic, and they had pointed out that Norway could hardly meet its international commitments for the reduction of greenhouse gases if it continued to export such fossil fuels.

41. She asked whether ethnic and other minority personnel hired under the action plan for work on diversity in the police force faced discrimination and whether their retention rates were lower than average. Noting that the European Court of Human Rights had recently issued five court decisions against the Government with respect to child welfare issues, she asked whether the Government was implementing the Court's decisions and whether it had conducted assessments of the mental health of children who had been

removed from their families. It would be of interest to the Committee to know whether female genital mutilation was a widespread problem in Norway, and what the suicide rates were for persons in detention, including refugees. Lastly, she was concerned about the fact that the preservation of Sámi cultural artefacts had reportedly received less government support than facilities for the preservation of other Norwegian cultural items, and that there was an insufficient number of facilities for Sámi cultural items.

42. **Ms. Shin** (Country Task Force) said that she wished to know whether the Government planned to take steps to provide for universal design to accommodate persons with disabilities at the workplace, including its incorporation in the software used in information and communication technologies. The delegation had answered the Committee's concerns about the fact that minorities faced barriers in accessing social security by stating that access to social security services and benefits was universal and provided on an equal footing nationwide, but such a position did not take into account the specific needs of those minorities. Noting that the State party had failed to implement, or fully implement, many of the recommendations previously issued by the Committee, she said that it might be useful for the Government to establish an interministerial body to follow-up on the implementation of human rights treaties and provide for some coordination, and that it would be best if such a mechanism included participation by civil society and the national human rights institution, which must be properly resourced and staffed. Norway had ratified the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. She noted that although the delegation had stated that the Norwegian Government considered the two Covenants to be on an equal footing, the State party's failure to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights would indicate otherwise.

43. **Mr. Abashidze** (Country Task Force) said that he would like to know whether representatives of the Sámi people and other ethnic minorities had taken part in the preparation of the new school curriculum that was to be introduced in late 2020, and if so, what kind of proposals they had made and whether they had been taken into account. Noting that funding for education was provided at the local level while policy was decided at the central level, he asked whether there were differences in the services offered in different places based on their economic situation, and what measures the central Government was taking to bridge any gaps. Would the Government consider establishing permanent facilities to preserve and exhibit Sámi cultural items, and would it provide further funding in support of museums that preserved the culture of the Sámi and other minority peoples?

44. **Ms. Ravenberg** (Country Task Force) said that she wished to know more about mental health services for disadvantaged and marginalized persons and about the use of coercive treatment of mental health patients. The Committee had received reports of medication and electroconvulsive treatments that were given without the patients' consent, sometimes in combination with solitary confinement in institutional settings such as psychiatric hospitals and nursing homes. It would appreciate information from the Government explaining the legislative framework for the use of coercion, whether records of such treatment were kept, and how the related policy was implemented in the treatment of mental health patients deprived of their liberty. The Committee would be interested in receiving more details about the report issued by a legislative commission on coercion in the health care sector, as well as statistics on suicide and attempts at suicide in detention.

45. Noting that an expert committee in 2018 had called for reform of the country's policy on drugs, she asked whether its recommendations had led to any concrete action and whether any steps had been taken to decriminalize drug use. According to information from the Ministry of Health, one third of older persons who were patients in Norwegian hospitals and health centres were malnourished or at risk. What measures were being taken to address that situation and to alleviate child poverty, which had reportedly increased between 2007 and 2017 to the point where it had affected over 10 per cent of children?

46. **Ms. Crăciunean-Tatu** said that the linkage between education and cultural rights was of great importance and that unitary schooling had been central to the construct of the Norwegian nation-State. In recent years, the unity of the school environment had faced the challenge of addressing the growing diversity of Norwegian society. Several studies dating from 2014 and 2015 had found that Norwegian teachers often lacked the skills and appropriate tools to address the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. She

would appreciate it if the delegation could comment on those findings. The Committee would also like to hear about efforts to include more information on Sámi culture and the movement for Sámi rights in school curricula, and how representatives of the Sámi community were being included in such efforts.

47. **Mr. Windfuhr** said that it was paradoxical that Norway had adopted impressive policies to protect the environment domestically, while at the same time developing its fossil fuel sector. He would be interested to hear the delegation's views concerning that paradox and any societal debate that was taking place on that subject. Regarding the malnutrition of older persons in institutions or receiving home care, he would like to know the Government's assessment of the scope of the problem and its approach to address it, and also whether any complaints mechanisms existed to deal with it. Lastly, he had heard that persons with disabilities were no longer included in tripartite labour agreements. Could the delegation clarify whether that was true, and if so, provide some explanation for such a change?

48. **Mr. Emuze** said that the State party had made efforts to prevent discrimination, for example through housing laws and the reform of the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal. He noted that a submission addressing the questions of racism and discrimination had been made to the Norwegian parliament in 2019 and that, according to some people, that approach was less effective than the role performed by an ombudsman. He asked whether the delegation could elaborate on the new legislation that had been adopted against racism and discrimination.

The meeting was suspended at noon and resumed at 12.20 p.m.

49. **Mr. Brattskar** (Norway) said that reducing demand for petroleum was a more effective approach to lowering global emissions than limiting national production or exports of oil and gas. While the Government recognized the need to transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy, the Norwegian petroleum industry would not cease operations in the near future. Norway was a leader in the development and promotion of clean energy, and its oil and gas sectors were much cleaner than those in other parts of the world.

50. With regard to investments made by the Government Pension Fund Global, the Council on Ethics, which was an independent body, made recommendations on the exclusion of companies that engaged in gross or systematic violations of human rights. In line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, exclusion was used as a measure of last resort. While the Council on Ethics took the position that companies should not be excluded from the Pension Fund solely because they engaged in activities in the West Bank, it had recommended the exclusion of a number of companies that had built Israeli settlements there. An expert commission had been appointed to assess the existing ethical guidelines and would submit its report in June 2020.

51. The official development assistance provided by Norway was allocated on the basis of need. Norway was particularly active in the areas of climate and energy, good governance, economic development, humanitarian assistance, health and education and gender issues. Although there was limited administrative capacity for the provision of bilateral assistance, the Government was aiming to ensure that 50 per cent of bilateral initiatives included gender among their main objectives. The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation had a strong evaluation unit, and the results of its assessments were available online. Approximately 2.4 per cent of official development assistance was used in Norway itself for expenses related to refugees.

52. Female genital mutilation had been outlawed in Norway for more than 20 years. The related action plan, which had been in place since 2000, had recently been expanded to include other harmful practices such as early and forced marriage. Female genital mutilation was a problem in Norway, since much of the migrant population came from countries where it was practised.

53. **Ms. Drazdiak** (Norway) said that the Government firmly believed that the review of the Instructions for the Preparation of Central Government Measures had not weakened standards in the legislative process. The Government Agency for Financial Management had assessed the implementation of measures by government bodies; the corresponding report would be issued in March 2020.

54. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the lead agency on the follow-up to the recommendations made by the Committee.
55. The National Human Rights Institution was fully independent and received its budget directly from Parliament. Neither Parliament nor the Government had the right to instruct the Institution in operational or substantive matters.
56. Specific guidelines were in place for the recruitment of police officers from minority backgrounds. All employment advertisements for the police force included standard text stating that the best qualified candidate was sought and encouraging persons from diverse backgrounds to apply. All police employees were trained in the application of ethical guidelines. In 2018, 13 per cent of new students at the Police University College came from minority ethnic backgrounds; in 2019, the figure had stood at 9 per cent.
57. With regard to deaths in detention, one person had died by suicide in prison in 2018. In 2019, six prisoners had died by suicide.
58. **Ms. Bolstad** (Norway) said that she was not aware of any deaths by suicide in immigration detention centres in recent years. Such centres had capacity for 220 men and 18 women. Most stays lasted 72 hours or less, as the centres were used to accommodate persons awaiting deportation. A medical team of three nurses and one doctor was on call.
59. **Ms. Skarstein** (Norway) said that the Procurement Act contained several provisions requiring public purchasers to consider environmental, social and working conditions during procurement exercises. Proper working conditions were safeguarded in the production of goods, in accordance with the standards enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenant and relevant ILO conventions.
60. While persons with disabilities had the right to individual accommodations in the workplace, there was no legal requirement for the universal design of information and communication technologies and no plans to institute such a requirement.
61. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act of 2018 had replaced the four pieces of legislation that had existed previously, with a view to rendering legal protections more accessible and efficient. Under the new Act, the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman had sole responsibility for issuing guidance, while the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal was tasked with handling complaints and granting compensation in straightforward cases. A new action plan to combat racism and discrimination had been submitted in 2018 and would be evaluated at a later date.
62. **Mr. Vinje** (Norway) said that the Government allocated an annual block grant to the Sámi Parliament, which then distributed the funds to other entities, including the six museums of Sámi culture. The construction of cultural facilities was the responsibility of the Government's construction agency. The Government had recently made a significant investment in the Sámi National Theatre and the museums showcasing East and South Sámi culture. The intangible cultural heritage of the Sámi had been identified as a priority for Norway in its implementation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.
63. **Ms. Geving** (Norway) said that the Government took cases that came before the European Court of Human Rights very seriously. In the light of rulings issued by the Court, the Supreme Court of Norway had admitted four child welfare cases to its Grand Chamber. New child welfare legislation was at the drafting stage.
64. The Ministry of Children and Families had recently conducted a study to determine the level of family contact that was most appropriate for children who were subject to care orders. The results of the study were being used to shape new regulations on family contact.
65. **Ms. Espinoza** (Norway) said that student loans were not considered as income when assessing poverty levels. The grant scheme to combat child poverty had been assessed in 2018 and found to be operating appropriately. The Government's priority in tackling child poverty was to increase the number of parents in employment. The amount of the universal child benefit paid to parents of all children under the age of 18 years had recently been increased. From 1 September 2020, there would be an additional increase in child benefit paid for children under the age of 6 years. A number of measures had been introduced to make childcare more affordable.

66. **Mr. Uchermann** (Norway) said that the Government was preparing a multi-agency action plan to reduce the number of deaths by suicide.

67. Reducing the use of coercion in mental health care was a priority. The Ministry of Health had instructed hospitals to take greater responsibility in prevention efforts. It had also set forth clear requirements regarding the legal rights of patients in secure mental health facilities. In 2018, the Ministry had tasked regional health trusts with conducting consultations with patients and associations of users of mental health services regarding the use of coercion in mental health facilities. The Directorate of Health was providing guidance on preventing coercion and recommendations in that regard would be forthcoming. In 2017, all health trusts had established alternatives to medication-based treatments. A total of 56 places had been created in 14 departments for drug-free treatment.

68. In 2017, significant amendments had been made to the Mental Health Care Act. Persons with the capacity to consent now had the right to refuse treatment unless they posed a danger to themselves or to the lives or health of others. The proposals contained in the report on the use of coercion presented by the multidisciplinary legislative committee would be considered by the Ministry of Health, with the aim of submitting a bill to Parliament as soon as possible. In recent years, funding had been increased with a view to strengthening community-based mental health services.

69. Prisoners had the same rights to primary and specialized health care as the general population. The provision of primary and dental care for prisoners was the responsibility of the municipalities in which prisons were located; the State provided annual grants for that purpose. The provision of specialized health care for prisoners was the responsibility of the regional health authorities. Addiction wards had been established in 17 prisons.

70. Studies had shown that the prevalence of mental health disorders and addiction was significantly higher among the prison population than the general population. As a result, the Directorate for Correctional Services and the Directorate of Health had proposed a number of measures to strengthen services for prisoners requiring mental health care or treatment for substance abuse. In 2020, a reinforced unit had been established for prisoners with severe mental disorders.

71. Prisoners convicted of sexual offences often chose to isolate themselves. A project on the provision of treatment for such prisoners had been piloted between 2016 and 2019 and would be rolled out nationally in 2020. In 2020, the instructions provided to the regional health authorities by the Ministry of Health included a requirement for the development of specific area plans for local mental health and addiction treatment for prisoners.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.