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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Thirty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)* OF THE 34th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 12 November 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. BONOAN-DANDAN

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS (continued)

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Initial report of the Republic of Moldova (continued) (E/1990/5/Add.52; E/C.12/Q/MOL/1; HR/CESCR/NONE/2003/6; HRI/CORE/1/Add.114)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Slonovschi (Republic of Moldova) took a place at the Committee table.

III. Issues relating to specific rights recognized in the Covenant (continued)

Articles 13-15 of the Covenant (continued)

2. Mr. CEAUSU asked whether there were any cooperation agreements on culture and education between Moldova and other countries, particularly neighbouring countries. For example, did young Moldovans receive grants or scholarships from the State to study abroad at the secondary or university levels?

3. While the principle of ensuring the preservation of the cultural identity of the country's various national minorities was an honourable one, it must have limits, particularly as it involved significant financial resources. The status of cultural minority could not be granted to every national group, such as the small Korean group that, in recent years, had settled in Moldova. National minorities were those that had a historical link with the territory of the State, or that came from neighbouring countries.

4. Mr. MARCHÁN ROMERO, referring to the right to participate in cultural life and to develop and express ethnic and cultural identity, asked whether minorities were in a position to freely and independently provide information on minority issues to the Moldovan population, as that was not the same thing as broadcasting programmes in a minority language. According to the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the media in Moldova were strongly influenced by the main political forces in the country; the authorities should create conditions under which the media could play an independent and positive role in the promotion of inter-ethnic understanding. Although according to the State party's report (E/1990/5/Add.52, para. 593) cultural activities were not subject to censorship, the core document suggested otherwise (HRI/CORE/1/Add.114, para. 50). He requested clarification.

5. With regard to the right to information, minority groups, as the mere beneficiaries of radio and television broadcasts, seemed to play a passive role. Were they involved in any way in providing the information themselves, or were they always in the position of being informed?

6. He would welcome more information on the legal context in Moldova for article 15 of the Covenant on the right to participate in cultural life.

7. Ms. BRAS GOMES asked what the Government intended to do in light of the high number of girls not finishing primary education, and the decrease in the number of girls attending university. She would be interested to hear the reasons, as lack of access to education perpetuated the cycle of poverty for women. What measures were being taken in view of the fact that only 60 per cent of children attended pre-school, and that access was even more limited in villages? She would welcome information on what types of recreational activities were available for children who spent a lot of time in such institutions as boarding schools.
8. Mr. KERDOUN, further to his questions at the 32nd meeting, asked what the State was doing to help send the poorest children to school? According to the initial report, 11 per cent of children were not in school. That situation was clearly in violation of article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in which States undertook to make education compulsory and available free to all. He would welcome more information on what measures were being taken to achieve that goal.
9. Of students admitted to university, what percentage were women and what were the percentages for students from urban and rural areas? What was the difference between instruction at higher schools, entry to which was competitive, and at universities?
10. Mr. SADI asked whether the Committee's general comments No. 11, on plans of action for primary education, and No. 13, on the right to education, had been taken into consideration in the planning of the country's education strategy. The Committee had put considerable effort into elaborating the comments, and he wondered whether the Government was aware of them and to what extent they had been factored into its education plans.
11. Ms. IYER asked whether, in addition to poverty, problems of accessibility might not be contributing to low school attendance. Were there sufficient schools in rural areas? She would welcome information on whether there were any free residential schools in the country, as that might encourage parents to send their children to school.
12. Mr. CEAUSU said that the problem of providing instruction for Roma children in their mother tongue was an issue not only in Moldova, but also in neighbouring countries. He would be interested to hear what measures the Moldovan Government was taking in that respect.
13. Mr. SINGH (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was concerned by a number of issues relating to the education system in Moldova. The first was the decreasing number of people in basic education, at both the primary and secondary levels, since 1998. He would welcome more information on that issue, and also on the worrying pre-school situation.
14. The trend towards privatized funding for education, with the emphasis on private contributions, was a matter for concern, particularly as the poorest children would be further marginalized as they would not have access to private education. A UNESCO priority was the promotion of education as a public good.
15. UNESCO had assisted Moldova in the preparation of national action plans, and would be happy to assist further in the legislative and normative areas. A priority area for UNESCO was assisting Member States in reinforcing constitutional frameworks for the right to education. A

key recommendation arising from the second High-Level Group Meeting on Education For All, held in Abuja in 2002, was the modernization and development of national legislation to reflect the legal and political obligation to make free primary education universal.

16. Mr. SLONOVSKI (Republic of Moldova) said that bilateral education agreements existed between Moldova and various countries in the region, including Romania, Ukraine and Russia. Not only were Moldovan students sent to study abroad at both the secondary and university levels, but foreign students also studied at various Moldovan educational institutions. Agreements with Bulgaria and Turkey offered Moldovan students, particularly those from the Bulgarian and Gagauz minorities, the opportunity to study in those countries in their native language. Teachers also came to Moldova from those countries to teach Bulgarian and Gagauz to students from those national minorities.

17. The principal minority groups were Moldav, 64 per cent; Ukrainian, 13 per cent; Russian, 13 per cent; Gagauz, 3.5 per cent; and Bulgarian, 2 per cent. There were also German, Roma, Belarusian, Tatar, Korean and other national minorities: more than 45 in all. A sensitive policy towards minorities was a vital aspect of State policy. Accordingly, the Moldovan Government placed major emphasis on the issue of cultural identity, and encouraged the use and study of national minority languages.

18. The Government had created a democratic political structure that offered the possibility of integrating all the national and cultural minorities into political life. The Government had adopted numerous laws directly related to national identity and there were a number of presidential decrees which promoted the cultural specificities of each minority. The Constitution and the Declaration of Independence also guaranteed economic, cultural and social rights to all the country's citizens, including minorities.

19. The Russian language, which was widely used throughout the country, had official status and was used in all socio-political fields and official communications. A number of radio and television programmes were broadcast in Russian, and there was a variety of Russian-language newspapers. The Gagauz language had official status in the autonomous territory of Gagauz, and was also used in non-official communications in the rest of the country. The company Teleradio-Gagauzia broadcast in Gagauz throughout the whole region. In addition, the State broadcaster, Teleradio-Moldova, broadcast nationally many programmes that dealt with the social, cultural and political life of that minority. Seven newspapers and magazines were published in the Gagauz language. Ukrainian and Bulgarian were both also widely spoken, with official status for Bulgarian in the southern region of Transnistria. Teleradio-Moldova broadcast radio and television programmes in those languages on a daily basis, and various local radio and television stations also occasionally broadcast programmes in Ukrainian. Two newspapers were published in the Ukrainian language. The Roma language was used on a non-official basis and Teleradio-Moldova broadcast in the Roma language on a monthly basis. The absence of any print media in the Roma language could be attributed to a lack of interest on the part of the minority, and not to any reluctance on the part of the Government.

20. All citizens and residents were guaranteed the right to enjoy cultural activities. The Government also ensured the necessary conditions to enable minority groups to maintain ties with their country of origin.

21. Not all the media in the country were controlled by the Government. For example, there were a number of publications by opposition and minority groups. The State television and radio company, Teleradio-Moldova, had been made into an independent public body. A new law on radio and television had been enacted, providing for independence of the media. All citizens and residents of Moldova were guaranteed the right to free access to information.

22. On education, the Government had established special commissions composed of representatives of the education system and police force tasked with bringing children from poor families back to school. As a result, the number of truants had dropped from 1,600 in December 2002 to 1,200 in March 2003. The Government had drawn up a five-year national education plan. Other measures already introduced included provision of food services and transportation for children attending the first four grades of primary school, scholarships for persons in higher education, transparency in the selection of candidates for scholarships to study abroad, and introduction of distance education. The Government had also taken measures to ensure that kindergartens were reopened and various school structures strengthened to provide children with recreation opportunities after classes.

23. There were two types of school: State schools, which provided free education, and private schools, which charged tuition fees. While private schools were more attuned to European standards, the education which children received in State schools was also of high quality.

24. Mr. KOLOSOV wished to know whether Western pop culture was having an adverse effect on the country's young people. If so, it would be interesting to know what measures had been introduced to deal with the problem and whether the Government intended to ratify the European Convention on Transfrontier Television.

25. Mr. SLONOVSKI (Republic of Moldova) said that although people could not be prevented from watching what they wanted, the Government took steps to limit children's exposure to pop culture. A special coordination council monitored the content of television programmes. The Government had ratified the European Convention on Transfrontier Television and had prohibited the broadcasting of pornography, horror movies and violent shows. Programmes that could have an adverse effect on young people were shown late at night.

26. Ms. BRAS GOMES said that, according to the initial report (paras. 534 and 535), the pre-school system was in a state of permanent decline and that, according to table 37, there had been a steady drop in the number of children attending pre-school institutions. She wished to know whether the situation had changed.

27. Mr. SLONOVSKI (Republic of Moldova) said that the situation in rural areas had changed for the worse. There had been a decrease in the number of kindergartens both because local authorities did not have sufficient means to finance them and because parents often preferred to raise their children at home. The Government was trying to find the necessary funds, but the task was not an easy one.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.