



International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

Distr. : General

4 April 2023

Original: English

Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families Thirty-sixth session

Summary record of the 516th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 28 March 2023, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Corzo Sosa

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 73 of the Convention
(*continued*)

Second periodic report of Morocco (continued)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.



The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 73 of the Convention *(continued)*

Second periodic report of Morocco (continued) (CMW/C/MAR/2;
CMW/C/MAR/QPR/2)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Morocco joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Morocco**, replying to questions posed at the previous meeting (see CMW/C/SR.515), said that migration had long contributed to the diversity and richness of Morocco, which was a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants. National policies and strategies on migration and asylum, based on humanitarian approaches and the protection of migrants, had been adopted; and a number of innovative steps had been taken to regularize the status of migrants in an irregular situation. For example, two exceptional regularization operations had been conducted in recent years, benefiting some 50,000 persons, the vast majority of them from countries in Africa. While many of those migrants had been transiting to Europe, a flexible, hybrid approach had been taken in order to regularize the status of as many persons as possible.
3. With regard to the relocation of migrants, it should be noted that the authorities acted on a clear legal basis at all times. Moreover, such relocations were illustrative of the humanitarian approach being taken towards migrants. In forests in the north of the country, for example, the authorities had taken action to relocate migrants living in conditions that were an affront to human dignity and to wrest them from the clutches of criminal gangs. Such measures were fully in line with international conventions, including article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, pursuant to which States had a positive obligation to protect the right to life. The relocation of those migrants was therefore justified not only for the reasons stated but also to prevent them from attempting the perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea.
4. Migrants were relocated to urban areas where they benefited from decent living conditions and received support from civil society, backed by the local authorities and the generosity of the local population. Efforts were made to facilitate their voluntary return to their countries of origin, eliminating the need for refoulement or expulsion. In recent years, more than 20,000 migrants had voluntarily returned home, almost half of them in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration.
5. Generalized violence towards foreign migrants did not exist. All efforts, including with regard to the training of law enforcement and other personnel working with migrants, were based on the protective approach already described, and supported by a Moroccan society in which racism and xenophobia had never taken root. In the event that isolated events of excessive force did occur, the necessary administrative or criminal procedures were applied.
6. In the light of his country's geographical location, just 14 km from Europe, the Mediterranean Sea had become the main route used by trafficking networks. Criminal gangs resorted to increasingly dangerous routes and overloaded their boats, thus contributing to the high number of capsizals and drownings. Against that backdrop, the Royal Navy and coastguards had saved the lives of some 90,000 persons at sea. At ports of entry, such rescues triggered the activation of emergency civil protection procedures, which included the provision of shelter and health-care services; the distribution of hygiene kits; the use of interpreters in interviews with rescued migrants; and the identification of unaccompanied minors, trafficking victims, asylum-seekers and economic migrants.
7. Regarding a question concerning events at Ouled Ziane in Casablanca, it should be noted that, owing to its economic importance, Casablanca had attracted flows of migrants in an irregular situation. The vast majority lived peacefully among the Moroccan population and engaged in economic activities. However, some groups of migrants had unlawfully occupied shops and public spaces where they were living in substandard conditions and disturbing public order. Following complaints from the local community, the authorities had taken steps to clear those premises in a peaceful and legal manner. However, a number of

migrants had resisted, attacking and injuring several law enforcement officers. Those persons had been prosecuted in accordance with the law.

8. **A representative of Morocco** said that a number of electoral laws gave legal effect to the constitutional right of Moroccan migrant workers residing abroad to vote and to stand for election. Specific measures taken in that regard included the right to vote by proxy and the introduction of financial incentives for political parties to include Moroccan migrant workers on electoral lists.

9. **Mr. Sekkouri** (Morocco) said that, in recent years, the political participation of Moroccan migrant workers residing abroad had been visible not only in terms of voting in elections, but also in their representation as deputies in the lower chamber of Parliament.

10. **A representative of Morocco** said that the law to combat human trafficking provided for a victim-centred approach, which was applied without discrimination to Moroccan and non-Moroccan victims alike. The law also envisaged the non-prosecution of victims and the provision of legal aid. A national strategy to combat human trafficking, which was centred on four principles – prevention, protection, non-impunity and partnership – contained a number of strategic objectives, subobjectives and measures pertaining specifically to the situation of migrants. Over the past year, a national committee for preventing human trafficking and coordinating anti-trafficking measures had provided financial support for more than 20 projects run by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), among them a shelter for victims of trafficking, in particular migrant victims, which had dealt with 25 cases to date.

11. Capacity-building had been provided for those working with migrants, including representatives of NGOs specializing in that field. As a result, there had been an increase in the number of persons benefiting from legal aid and social services, in particular women migrants and unaccompanied migrant children. Through the establishment of legal training platforms, which were open to NGOs, as well as the creation of networks of lawyers in border areas and larger cities with significant migrant populations, a number of lawyers and court interpreters had received training on migrant issues. Lastly, more than 10,000 copies of a booklet on the rights of trafficking victims had been distributed in English and French, and a national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking, including migrants, had been set up.

12. **A representative of Morocco** said that a bilateral agreement between Morocco and Spain on seasonal and long-term migrant workers was aimed at managing migratory flows in a less restrictive manner, thereby discouraging irregular migration. Among other aspects, the agreement contained provisions on the procedures for communicating an offer of employment, the evaluation of the necessary professional skills, the rights of Moroccan migrant workers with regard to social protection and special conditions for seasonal migrant workers. A coordination committee had been set up to monitor implementation of the agreement and establish follow-up measures.

13. In addition, a memorandum of understanding had recently been signed with Spain aimed at identifying and jointly implementing safe, orderly and regular migration projects. The overarching objective was to support returning Moroccan migrant workers to use the work experience and training that they had acquired in the host country to gain access to the Moroccan labour market, thereby contributing to their own and the country's economic, social and cultural development.

14. **Mr. Sekkouri** (Morocco) said that, within the framework of the memorandum of understanding, action had been taken aimed at supporting returning migrant seasonal workers – many of them rural women who lacked specific skills. A programme had been set up by the National Agency for Promoting Employment and Skills to help those workers, not only to engage in income-generating activities and access the labour market but also to benefit from training. For instance, on the basis of a list of occupations needed in the Spanish market, training centres in Morocco would provide women migrant workers with short, intensive vocational training, resulting in an increased level of skills, opportunities and revenue.

15. In parallel, and as part of a government plan to invest in the future of returning migrant workers, the Office of Vocational Training and Employment Promotion was launching a national certification scheme, with a view to recognizing the skills and experience gained by Moroccan or foreign migrant workers who lacked formal qualifications, thus enabling them

to gain access to the labour market. Some 90,000 places for vocational training were already available for such persons. The aim was to foster a more circular approach to migration, with Moroccan migrant workers being upskilled before departing for work abroad, thereby enabling them to earn higher wages and gain access to better opportunities in the host country and on their return. In addition to Spain, a number of other countries had expressed an interest in that circular approach and, in particular, in the investments being made in returning migrant workers.

16. Various measures had been taken in that direction. For instance, the National Agency for Promoting Employment and Skills had recently been reformed. There were plans to expand the number of its local branches and new roles had been created within the Agency to manage the overseas placement and return of migrant workers. An employment programme had been created for Moroccan migrant workers in situations of vulnerability during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, many of whom had seen their incomes plummet owing to restrictions on travel to Spain. Under the State-funded programme, local authorities had provided temporary employment opportunities to some 100,000 persons, 30 per cent of them women, thus keeping them out of the informal sector and enabling millions of euros to be reinjected into the local economy. A second edition of the programme included a requirement for local authorities to provide opportunities for vulnerable foreign migrants too. Returning migrant workers and vulnerable populations had also benefited from initiatives to foster entrepreneurship, such as a programme, launched in 2022, which had provided loans and grants of up to €10,000 to some 10,000 persons. Another project had recently been established with the aim of encouraging small and medium-sized enterprises to employ Moroccan or foreign migrant workers, in particular those who lacked qualifications or were in an irregular situation; in return, the Government would cover half of the minimum wage of those persons for nine months, provided that the companies employed them for at least a year.

17. **A representative of Morocco** said that Morocco was one of the few countries in the world where cooperation was enshrined in the Constitution and, as far as migration was concerned, the Government remained committed, in particular, to South-South cooperation. In fact, the first generation of agreements on migration in the 1960s had been concluded not only with countries to the north but also with African countries, mirroring a balanced and cooperative approach to human mobility.

18. The King had presented the African Agenda for Migration in conjunction with the negotiations on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Agenda drew on three main components: firstly, each country needed to take ownership of its own migration policy; secondly, the transnational nature of migratory flows made subregional cooperation important; and thirdly, subregional cooperation would enable the African continent as a whole to develop its vision of migration and use that to build partnerships with other regions.

19. The twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP) had provided the opportunity to hold the first Africa Action Summit, which had in turn had led to the creation of three commissions dedicated to the Sahel region, the Congo Basin and the African island States respectively. The commissions were now operational and, supported by investment plans, were helping to stabilize population flows.

20. The initiative for the Adaptation of African Agriculture to Climate Change, which had also emerged from COP 22, was aimed at fostering an African approach to the management of migratory flows in the context of food scarcity and insecurity. Meanwhile, the Initiative on Sustainability, Stability and Security approached the issue in terms of the effect of desertification on migratory flows. The initiatives were all designed to find African solutions to problems that affected Africa as well as other continents.

21. The bilateral agreements signed with Spain were governed by European Union legislation in the case of Spain and, in the case of Morocco, by constitutional and international obligations relating to migrants' rights and human rights in general. Both countries were also bound by commitments to the right of recourse in the event of possible individual cases of rights violations or injustices.

22. The 45,000 Moroccan families expelled by Algeria in 1975 had been successfully absorbed into society. As the persons in question reached retirement age, they were entitled to all the recognized benefits enjoyed by civil servants and employees in Morocco. Moreover, the Government of Morocco was fulfilling its duty of memory by documenting the experiences of the victims. Issues relating to the rights of those persons in the country where they had previously lived were difficult to address, given the state of diplomatic relations with Algeria.

23. **Mr. Babacar** (Country Rapporteur) said that there seemed to be no reason for the State party not to ratify international instruments such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), given that they had already been approved in both Houses of Parliament. Taking such action would help protect vulnerable sections of the population, including migrants.

24. The new approach aimed at improving the skills of seasonal workers was a very interesting initiative. It was important also to ensure that the revised protocol to be agreed with Spain included measures to protect Moroccans travelling for seasonal jobs.

25. Regarding employment flexibility, more efforts were required to ensure that conditions for obtaining a work permit were sufficiently relaxed to allow migrants, who might be in a regular or irregular situation, to access permanent employment positions. Lastly, he would appreciate information regarding the rights of migrant workers in Morocco to sit on the boards of trade unions.

26. **Mr. García Sáenz** said that he had seen Morocco play an active role in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. He would be interested to know whether the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families would be similarly promoted by the Government, especially in the light of the fact that it had yet to be ratified by most European countries.

27. **Mr. Oumaria** (Country Rapporteur) said that he wondered whether the State party, as a leader in Africa on the question of migration, could encourage the African Union to hold summits on migration in order to help foster strong, continent-level decisions. The report on the tragic events at the border with Melilla needed to be widely circulated in order to raise awareness of what had happened and the measures that were being taken avoid any repeat.

28. Many decisions and actions relating to migrants and refugees had been implemented at national level, but the target groups were not always aware of their rights. He would like to know whether the State party had any structures in place at regional and city level to help circulate information and provide migrant workers with legal, economic, social and cultural support. Lastly, he wished to encourage the State party to strengthen information channels to ensure that officials whose work brought them into contact with migrants were aware of the legislative and regulatory measures that existed to protect the human rights of such persons.

29. **Mr. Ceriani Cernadas** said that he would be grateful for more detailed information on the content of planned migration and asylum legislation and how it would comply with the Convention and other human rights commitments made by the State party. More information about the involvement of Morocco in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) would also be welcome. He would like to know whether Morocco had any plans to join the group or participate in subregional cooperation dialogue and, if so, how that might affect migration policy, especially in view of the agreement on the free movement of persons between ECOWAS members.

30. Thousands of persons whose refugee status had been recognized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees continued to wait for the State party to grant them similar recognition. Without it, they lacked the documentation they required to work and begin the process of social and economic integration. He would appreciate more information about their situation.

31. He wondered what the State party's response was to the shocking images of the events at the border with Melilla on 24 June 2022. In the light of the swift legal action that had targeted persons attempting to scale the fence that day, it would be interesting to know

whether any investigations had also taken place into the possible excessive use of force by law enforcement personnel.

32. He would like to know whether relocation initiatives were undertaken as protection measures or migration control measures because, depending on how they were defined, either the security forces or social protection organizations intervened. He also wished to know what effect the initiatives had had, whether any persons had been integrated in other cities and to what extent the interventions had helped improve the situation of persons living in settlements near the northern border.

33. **Ms. Dzumhur** said that many migrants from Morocco attempting to reach European countries were particularly vulnerable to trafficking because they had no identification papers. The fact that the State party had no diplomatic missions along the migratory routes exacerbated the situation and hindered NGOs working to support migrants. She would welcome further information on the programme to assist Moroccans abroad, including when it would be adopted and whether it would strengthen cooperation with States along the migration routes. She would also like to know of any planned cooperation measures aimed at better identifying migrants.

34. **Ms. Diallo** said that it was concerning that article 516 of the Labour Code allowed the Government to withdraw at any time a migrant's authorization to work. The Committee would appreciate statistics relating, not only to authorizations that had been granted, but also to those that had been withdrawn under that provision. It would also be interesting to know what conditions applied in such cases. She would like to know whether Morocco would be willing to make the declaration under article 77 of the Convention to recognize the competence of the Committee to receive and consider individual communications. Doing so would help cement the country's positive image as an advocate of the migration issue in Africa.

35. **Ms. Gahar** said that she would be grateful for data, disaggregated by gender and ethnic origin, concerning the prioritization of children's rights in the context of international migration, as envisaged in joint general comment No. 3 of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families/No. 22 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017). Similarly, she would appreciate disaggregated data relating to Moroccan children who were unaccompanied or in an isolated situation abroad.

36. With regard to administrative or judicial decisions concerning the entry, stay or removal of a child, or the expulsion of a parent, in the context of regular and irregular migration, and in the light of the fact that most migrants who practised begging did so accompanied by their children, she wished to know what mechanisms and procedures were in place to protect the interests of affected children, within the framework of article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She would also welcome information on any reporting mechanisms and statistics deriving from those mechanisms.

37. **The Chair** said that it would be helpful to find out about any legislation, protocols or mechanisms in place to protect and support human rights defenders in their work. He wondered whether the plethora of requirements to be met for obtaining a residence permit were truly necessary, and whether the State party might contemplate removing some of the obstacles to renewing such permits. The seemingly irreconcilable tension between border control policies and respect for human rights in hotspots of migration around the world created manifold problems, although not always as dramatic as in the case of the events of 24 June 2022 at the Melilla border fence. He would be interested to learn of the State party's vision for a migration policy of the future that could reconcile border control with respect for human rights.

The meeting was suspended at 4.30 p.m. and resumed at 4.55 p.m.

38. **Mr. Sekkouri** (Morocco) said that, although the ruling coalition held a healthy majority, rather than pushing through its own agenda it had chosen to embark on an ambitious social dialogue and, for the first time in the country's history, a social agreement with clear timelines had been concluded. Discussions were scheduled for July 2023 to consider the contents of a new labour code. Instead of addressing issues relating to the existing Code in a

fragmented fashion, the Government had opted for a new code, to be formulated in consultation with the most representative trade unions. Over the past 10 months, much else had been done to pave the way to new labour regulations. A historic agreement had been signed in late 2022 to secure benefits for the country's teaching corps, its university staff and health workers that reflected the crucial importance of their work. Substantial investments would be made to that end. Measures were also being taken to strengthen the role of unions and promote an active social State model where people could earn a living wage.

39. Contemporary societies were increasingly unjust, and governments had a duty to protect the vulnerable, including migrants, and ensure that business interests did not prevail over the well-being of workers. Any decisions on the development or ratification of new instruments would emanate from outcomes reached in consultation with the unions.

40. Although legislation was in place to regulate domestic labour, it was difficult for labour inspectors to enter people's homes to verify compliance. A different approach was required and several issues needed to be resolved. The first difficulty was the cost associated with the regularization of domestic work. Several small-scale surveys had revealed that many female domestic workers were reluctant to regularize their employment situation for fear of losing their entitlement to the free health insurance scheme for the poor, which also covered irregular workers. If they shifted to a contributory scheme and lost their job, they would struggle to pay. A decree had been adopted in 2022 to expand social security coverage to all workers, including self-employed migrant workers. The second issue was the social security cost associated with regular work, which accounted for 21 per cent of the salary. A high-budget programme to be implemented by the National Agency for Promotion of Employment and Skills provided for the State to cover employment-related social costs. The question of unemployment benefits for domestic workers would be addressed in the context of the discussions on a new labour code in July 2023, and the deadline for implementation was 2025.

41. The introduction of a formal apprenticeship programme for domestic workers was also being debated. Such a measure would facilitate official recognition of the profession of domestic worker and help promote a shift from informal to formal employment. When looking at labour relations in Morocco, it was important to bear in mind the historic significance of trade unions, which were at the origin of the country's independence and thus part of its identity.

42. **A representative of Morocco** said that, as of 31 December 2022, the governmental authority responsible for employment had issued 12,625 work permits, including 7,390 permits relating to first-time employment contracts; 33.2 per cent of permits had been awarded to women migrant workers. Work visas for foreigners were granted on the basis of an employment contract and could be withdrawn in exceptional circumstances, such as a serious breach of the contract or labour legislation on the part of a worker. While that possibility existed in law, in practice no foreign worker had ever had his or her work visa revoked. Employment contracts responded, above all, to the needs of employers and were concluded in the framework of reciprocal agreements with countries such as Senegal, Tunisia, Algeria and France, among others. Visa procedures for foreign workers had been reviewed in 2017. Work visas for fixed-term contracts covered the duration of the contract, while those relating to permanent jobs were issued for 5 years, renewable up to a maximum period of 10 years.

43. **Mr. Sekkouri** (Morocco) said that labour law provisions generally aimed to protect, not restrict employees' rights. The formalization, and thus traceability, of employment was crucial to such protection. The authorities responsible for labour market entry of foreign workers fulfilled a critical oversight function in that regard.

44. **Mr. Zniber** (Morocco) said that, in order to promote ratification of the Convention, in particular among the countries of the global North, the Government used the manifold opportunities provided by the universal periodic review process. Several side events had been organized to that effect on the margins of Human Rights Council sessions. The Government also supported the work of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants.

45. The suggestion for Morocco to host an African summit on migration could certainly be given some thought. In the run-up to the Global Forum on Migration and Development,

Morocco had hosted a preparatory meeting to promote implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. In addition, a ministerial meeting had been hosted recently to discuss issues concerning the African diaspora and, in particular, the high levies on migrant remittances. The Moroccan business sector was the single most important investor in countries of ECOWAS. The country also participated in the development of regional energy security strategies, including the prospective Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline, which would meet the demands of the entire ECOWAS region.

46. In its vision for a future migration policy, the Government was firmly opposed to giving security precedence over all other considerations. While security was certainly important, given the complexity of migration, the associated problems could be resolved only by taking into account its economic, social and human dimensions. South-South cooperation would be an important pillar of the country's medium and long-term migration policy decisions.

47. **A representative of Morocco** said that Morocco took a humanist approach to migration. Information and support services for migrants were made available through the National Human Rights Council. The country's vibrant civil society sector also played an important role in supporting migrants from other African countries and raising awareness about their rights. Members of the police, the Royal Armed Forces and the Royal Gendarmerie all received human rights training. Moreover, the Moroccan Constitution was itself a charter of human rights, with 47 articles dedicated to that subject. The second phase of the National Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights, which was currently being implemented, addressed matters relating to human rights education and upheld the values of citizenship, equality and diversity.

48. **A representative of Morocco** said that the process to regularize the status of irregular migrants had benefited people of 116 nationalities; the renewal period for residency cards had been increased from one to three years. Under the comprehensive and integrated national strategy for migration and asylum adopted in 2014, continued efforts were made to promote the integration of migrant workers, mainstream migrants' rights across laws and policies, and establish relevant evaluation and monitoring mechanisms.

49. **A representative of Morocco** said that there were 166 Moroccan embassies distributed across the world, all of which provided consular services. Of the country's 59 consulates, 17 were located in France; 12 in Spain; 7 in Italy; 3 in the Netherlands; 3 in Algeria; 2 in Germany; 2 in Canada; and 1 in the United States of America. The 1,454 officials who worked in those consulates had all been trained to deliver social services to Moroccan nationals living abroad in regular and irregular situations. To support Moroccan nationals unable to travel to a consulate, services such as passport renewals and birth registration were also provided through 177 mobile consulates in various countries.

50. Under the national digital strategy, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Resident Abroad was working to digitalize a number of consular services. Certain services were now accessible through a website and a multilingual call centre, and appointments with consular officials could be booked via an online platform. In addition, a large amount of personal data had been digitized, including information contained in family booklets.

51. **A representative of Morocco** said that the Government placed the needs and best interests of children at the heart of its efforts to uphold children's rights, paying special attention to the integration of the children of migrants into Moroccan society and helping them to exercise their rights on an equal footing with others, regardless of the legal status of their parents. The Office of the High Commissioner for Planning would conduct a census in 2024 to collect data disaggregated by indicators such as sex, nationality, age and location.

52. Awareness-raising campaigns to tackle begging and to protect street children, including migrant children and child beggars, were carried out regularly by front-line public officials working in coordination with NGOs. Furthermore, guidelines had been developed to help officials identify children who had been forced into begging, including migrant children. The Government was proud to have spearheaded an Africa-wide campaign to support street children launched in 2018, which had been piloted in Rabat and was projected to be extended to other cities. Furthermore, the Public Prosecution Service had published

recommendations to officials in the judiciary on how to provide children, especially street children and migrant children, with the protection they needed and how to trigger the appropriate legal provisions to ensure that children in vulnerable situations could be reintegrated into their families or placed in alternative care arrangements. A national mechanism to identify and assist victims of trafficking paid particular attention to the children of migrants.

53. **A representative of Morocco** said that the Government's approach to the issue of unaccompanied children focused on prevention and the fight against human trafficking networks. The country had a robust institutional framework that implemented the integrated public policy for child protection 2015–2025 through structures such as child protection units and training centres. At the international level, the Government cooperated with partners to facilitate the return of unaccompanied Moroccan children to a safe family environment or social protection institution that could support their reintegration into society. The authorities also assisted the families of unaccompanied children.

54. **A representative of Morocco** said that the Government had acceded to the main human rights instruments and was adopting a careful and measured approach to those it had not yet ratified. There were more than 250,000 civil society organizations in Morocco, all of which were able to carry out their activities and monitor the human rights situation freely and without restrictions. The Government had always worked with United Nations mechanisms and instruments to address human rights issues in a positive, transparent and sensitive manner.

55. **A representative of Morocco** said that the integrated public policy for child protection 2015–2025 addressed all rights mentioned in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The policy had been designed in consultation with all stakeholders in the area of children's rights, including 730 children aged 12–18 years from 22 towns and cities and 100 children participating online. Local child protection services had been launched in 2019 to serve the most vulnerable children, and child protection units had been established in the most deprived neighbourhoods to identify children who were potential victims of criminal activity or problematic situations. As of January 2023, there were 105 social assistance offices covering all administrative jurisdictions supporting the social reintegration of children, particularly migrant children.

56. **A representative of Morocco** said that his Government had adopted a coherent, long-term approach to welcome migrants into the country, in contrast to the exclusionary approach taken by other countries in the region, and had regularized the status of around 50,000 migrants, mostly from other African nations. The decision to extend the validity of residence permits from one to three years had allowed migrants more time to integrate into Moroccan society and seek family reunification without the annual administrative burden of the renewal process. Very few applications for renewal were rejected and only a small number of applicants were asked to provide additional evidence to support their application.

57. **A representative of Morocco** said that his Government had recognized the competence of six of the nine treaty bodies to receive communications from or on behalf of individuals. In doing so, it had been guided by the principle of progressiveness and the need to establish suitable conditions for the implementation of conventions, such as the harmonization of domestic legislation. A similar approach would be taken when deciding whether to recognize the Committee's competence to consider individual communications under article 77 of the Convention.

58. **Mr. Sekkouri** (Morocco) said that the clash between border force officials and migrants near Melilla had been a highly unusual situation. The migrants involved were unlike those normally encountered by the security forces: they appeared to have received combat training and had ambushed officials with knives and stones, causing serious damage. The authorities had not used lethal weapons and had assisted individuals who had been injured as a consequence of overcrowding in the streets. Every effort had been made to provide those involved with access to justice, and more than a hundred doctors had been mobilized to provide health care and treatment.

59. For many years, the Government had been taking steps to ensure that the police served the public in an appropriate manner. Salaries had been increased to obviate insidious practices

that could affect the integrity of the force, police officers had received high-quality training and courses had been developed with the aim of fostering a culture of human rights. The security forces of Morocco had long experience of dealing successfully with demonstrations, including during the Arab Spring, partly because Morocco had democratic institutions strong enough to withstand protest.

60. The Government would make a decision on the relocation of migrants living in forests, who were at risk of trafficking, exploitation and informal work in poor conditions. Individuals in such situations should move to urban areas where they could be assured of a police presence, supportive communities and a flourishing, independent civil society sector.

61. **Mr. Babacar** said that he wished to know whether there were any specific capacity-building programmes in place for labour inspectors, given that they were responsible for enforcing labour legislation. The delegation might also wish to comment on any challenges encountered when registering the births of the children of migrants, including whether births were registered promptly. Lastly, he would be interested in learning of any tools that enabled migrant workers to send remittances to their country of origin without incurring excessive tax obligations.

62. **Ms. Poussi** (Country Rapporteur) said that she would like to hear about the challenges in accessing justice faced by Moroccan nationals living abroad, as well as the State party's response to such challenges. She wondered whether the support provided by the State party in partnership with civil society, specifically concerning the provision of legal assistance and advice to migrants and refugees in the country, was extended to Moroccan nationals abroad. The delegation might also wish to inform the Committee of the number of Moroccan nationals who had returned to the country through the national programme for voluntary repatriation and provide statistical data on the employment and entrepreneurship programmes run by the National Agency for Promoting Employment and Skills, including on the number of returning Moroccans who had received support through those programmes.

63. **The Chair** invited the State party to provide answers in writing to the questions raised by Mr. Babacar and Ms. Poussi.

64. **Mr. Oumaria** said that it had been a pleasure to hold such a constructive and frank dialogue. The State party was setting an example to the rest of the continent on how to address the issue of migration. While the issue was complex and challenges remained, it was clear that the State party was receptive to the Committee's suggestions and recommendations.

65. **Mr. Sekkouri** (Morocco) said that he appreciated the relevance of the Committee's questions and the different perspectives discussed, which would help his Government to enhance its approach to migration. To boost the country's economic and social development while also upholding its system of values, the Government was focusing on investing not in material assets but in the development of its people, as well as the enhancement of its structures, the application of the rule of law and improvements in access to information. Given the importance of human capital to the country's development, the issue of migration was a priority. Demand from developed countries was putting significant pressure on the country's pool of qualified human resources, a problem exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

66. Throughout the world, countries had to face the challenge of maintaining law and order while also fostering a culture of egalitarianism and human rights. In that regard, his Government was investing in robust democracy, as well as in education, training, the recognition of professional experience and the formalization of labour. Despite its limited resources, the Government would continue to take a proactive approach, including in its efforts to follow the Committee's recommendations.

67. **The Chair** said that he wished to congratulate the delegation on the constructive dialogue and encouraged the State party to continue taking steps to implement the Committee's recommendations.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.