



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 2903rd meeting*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 15 August 2022, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Shepherd

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

Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined tenth to twelfth periodic reports of Azerbaijan (CERD/C/AZE/10-12; CERD/C/AZE/Q/10-12)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Azerbaijan joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Mammadov** (Azerbaijan), introducing his country's combined tenth to twelfth periodic reports (CERD/C/AZE/10-12), said that, in 2018, with a view to more effective cooperation with the human rights treaty bodies, his Government had established a special working group to prepare periodic reports and monitor the implementation of recommendations. No effort was spared to meet the country's reporting obligations in a timely and consistent manner. The report had been prepared with input from the Office of the Procurator General, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) and local non-governmental organizations and contained information addressing the recommendations made in the Committee's previous concluding observations.
3. In multi-ethnic Azerbaijan, all necessary measures were taken to guarantee equality irrespective of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin and to ensure effective protection and remedies to everyone in the country's jurisdiction. The realization of human rights and freedoms was enshrined in the Constitution as the highest goal of the State. The more than fifty international human rights instruments to which Azerbaijan was a party formed an integral part of national law. The State guaranteed equal rights and freedoms to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, origin, property status, beliefs or membership of political parties, trade unions and other voluntary associations.
4. Azerbaijan stood against all ideas of superiority of one race or group of persons over others. Multiculturalism and tolerance were historically integral components of a society where representatives of various nationalities and faiths had always lived together in peace. Over fifty ethnic and religious groups lived in Azerbaijan and preserved their identity.
5. As recommended by the Committee, a comprehensive anti-discrimination law was currently being prepared by the Government. In October 2018, the President had approved an employment strategy for the period 2019–2030, which included measures to strengthen social protections for unemployed persons, regardless of race, ethnic origin, religion or language, and facilitate their integration into the labour market. A draft national strategy for the development of social services provided for equal rights to social protection for all citizens with no restrictions based on ethnicity.
6. In 2019, the Health Insurance Act had been amended to include foreigners and stateless persons under the protection of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the category of insured persons, on an equal basis with Azerbaijani citizens. Under national legislation, migrants had access to urgent and special medical care without any restrictions or discrimination. All migrants, including irregular migrants, were covered by the national plan for vaccination against coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and no deportations had been enforced during the pandemic.
7. At the 2019 session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Azerbaijan had pledged to naturalize all registered stateless persons in its territory within three years. The measures taken, directed by a working group with representatives of government agencies, UNHCR, the Office of the Ombudsman and local non-governmental organizations, had resulted in the naturalization of 201 stateless persons in 2021. UNHCR had commended the progress made.
8. In line with article 4 of the Convention, the law on information, information systems and data protection had been amended to combat racist hate speech in the media and over the Internet by prohibiting website owners and users of information and telecommunication networks, including social media, from distributing any content promoting violence or religious extremism or inciting ethnic, racial or religious hatred. The Code of Administrative Offences had been simultaneously amended to provide for the punishment of such dissemination.

9. Under the Citizens' Appeals Act, citizens were entitled to file complaints of racial discrimination, with no restrictions based on race, ethnicity or other protected characteristics, and receive a prompt response. The law enforcement authorities carefully examined all such complaints and took appropriate action. Since 2020, seven criminal cases had been initiated for offences related to ethnic, racial or religious hatred. Between 2016 and 2021, one person had been convicted of violating citizens' rights under the pretext of religious practice and one person had been convicted of inciting ethnic, racial, social or religious hatred or enmity.

10. In the previous three years, more than 1,300 public officials had participated in training sessions or conferences on international best practice in human rights. The Office of the Procurator General published information on measures taken to combat discrimination and intolerance on its official website and shared hashtags promoting human rights and legal awareness on social media. The Baku International Multiculturalism Centre, established in 2014, worked directly with ethnic minority communities, held regular meetings and discussions with social and cultural organizations and community representatives and implemented programmes and projects aimed at promoting cultural and ethnic diversity.

11. For three decades, the occupation by Armenia of internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan had been the main obstacle to implementation of the Convention throughout the country. Since Armenia had exercised effective control over the occupied territories and had failed to comply with the Convention, Azerbaijan had been unable to fulfil its obligations or prevent violations of the Convention in the territories during that period. The armed aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan and its unlawful conduct in the formerly occupied territories was rooted in a false and racist ideology promoting the idea of ethnic incompatibility between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, which was profoundly antithetical to the principles of the Convention.

12. Unfortunately, the international community had been unable to ensure compliance by Armenia with the Security Council resolutions requiring immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan. In 2020, Armenia had conducted a large-scale military offensive against units of the Azerbaijani armed forces and civilian residential areas in Azerbaijan, which had resulted in the deaths of some 100 Azerbaijani civilians, including 12 children, severe injuries to over 400 civilians, the displacement of almost 84,000 persons and the destruction or damage of over 4,300 private homes and other civilian buildings, including hospitals, schools and cultural monuments. Captured Azerbaijani soldiers and civilians had faced unlawful treatment based on their ethnicity, including extrajudicial execution and torture.

13. On 10 November 2020, the President of Azerbaijan, the President of the Russian Federation and the Prime Minister of Armenia had signed a trilateral statement agreeing to end the conflict and confirming the liberation of the territories previously occupied by Armenia. On re-entering the liberated territories, the Azerbaijani authorities had witnessed the scale of the devastation wrought by the occupation, with entire towns looted, vandalized and obliterated and hundreds of cultural heritage sites, including mosques, systematically destroyed or desecrated. To date, Armenia had taken no meaningful steps to investigate or prosecute the ethnically motivated crimes committed during the decades-long occupation and in the course of the war.

14. Since the end of the war, the Government of Azerbaijan had begun rebuilding cities and villages, road transport and civil infrastructure to uphold the right of more than 700,000 internally displaced persons to a speedy, safe and dignified return to their homeland. The return by displaced persons to the territories liberated from the Armenian occupation was an important part of the strategic road map on national priorities for socioeconomic development approved in 2021. To ensure their permanent return, great importance had been placed on the creation of safe and favourable living conditions and modern infrastructure in the formerly occupied territories.

15. Unfortunately, the return process was being hampered by the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance dating from the period of occupation, which had caused the deaths of more than 230 Azerbaijanis, mostly civilians, since the end of the conflict. The Azerbaijan

National Agency for Mine Action conducted training on the dangers of mines for returning families, and demining the territories would remain a high priority for the coming years.

16. Azerbaijan was committed to rebuilding the multi-ethnic and diverse communities which had populated the region before the occupation. The President had reaffirmed that commitment earlier in 2022, stating that all ethnic groups, including Armenians, lived in peace and dignity in Azerbaijan.

17. Azerbaijan had instituted proceedings against Armenia at the International Court of Justice for violations of the Convention, including the ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis from the formerly occupied territories, the unlawful expulsion of Azerbaijanis from their homes and the construction of illegal Armenian settlements. On 7 December 2021, the Court had issued orders relating to the requests for provisional measures made by both Azerbaijan and Armenia. The Court had rejected most of the requests made by Armenia but had indicated some provisional measures, which Azerbaijan was committed to applying, in compliance with its obligations under the Convention. The Court had ordered Armenia to take all necessary measures to prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred, including by organizations and private persons in its territory, targeted at persons of Azerbaijani national or ethnic origin. Unfortunately, the Government of Armenia had taken no action to implement the order.

18. The anti-Azerbaijani hate speech disseminated by the Government of Armenia over the decades had encouraged armed ethnonationalist organizations operating in Armenia to host military training camps and incite violence against Azerbaijanis with impunity. In recent months, participants in mass demonstrations across Armenia had been calling for “Armenia without Turks”, by which they meant the elimination of Azerbaijanis from Armenia and the formerly occupied territories on the basis of their national or ethnic origin.

19. The Government had made significant progress in implementation of the Convention, while recognizing that further improvements were necessary. Its long-standing cooperation with the Committee would help strengthen State guarantees of equality regardless of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, in law and in practice, thus promoting the understanding and tolerance that had existed in Azerbaijan for centuries.

20. **Ms. Chung** (Country Rapporteur) said that many persons had been subjected to human rights violations as a result of conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, which had a large population of ethnic Armenians. A peaceful and sustainable settlement of the conflict should be prioritized. The prevention of hostilities against ethnic Armenians would assist with the introduction of more inclusive policies towards other ethnic minorities, including Lezgins, Russians and Talysh, and also towards migrants, in view of increased reports of human rights violations against migrant workers in the oil industry, including trafficking, forced labour and a lack of birth registration for their children.

21. It would be helpful if the State party could provide recent information on the demographic composition of its population and on the number of migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons and internally displaced persons living in its territory, as well as information on the socioeconomic situation of the various groups that made up its population, disaggregated by ethnic origin, sex, gender and age. She wondered why the results of the population census conducted in 2019 had not yet been published and when they would be available; why the census had reportedly contained only a few questions relating to minorities; how the State party collected data on the demographics of minorities and groups such as migrants and stateless persons; how that data collection process could be improved; and whether the process was based on the principle of self-identification. She would appreciate clarification as to how many minority groups there were in Azerbaijan, as the State party had provided conflicting information on that point.

22. She would like to know more about the legislation and policies that had been adopted to ensure that ethnic minorities were able to fully enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Convention and that the progress made in protecting those rights was monitored. She was interested to know why Azerbaijan had not yet acted on its commitment to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and when it planned to do so. The Committee had been informed that, when Azerbaijan had gained independence, plans had been made to train teachers in higher education institutions in Talysh, Lezgin and Kurdish

studies, to open special departments for those subjects and to create a television channel that would broadcast programmes in minority languages. She wondered whether those plans had come to fruition. It would be helpful if the delegation could comment on reports that there were obstacles to studying and using minority languages in schools.

23. In the light of reports that textbooks and other educational materials perpetuated prejudices against Armenians, she would like to know what steps were being taken to review school curricula. The Committee had been informed that Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabakh region had their own education system. It would be useful to know whether the situation had changed following the war of 2020. She would like to invite the delegation to comment on reports that the Government suppressed minority cultures. For example, in 2016, the authorities had reportedly removed a memorial plaque that was important to the Lezgins from one of the oldest Sunni mosques in the country. She would also like to hear the delegation's comments on allegations that the Government had sought to rewrite history as far as ethnic minorities, including Armenians, were concerned. She wondered whether the Ministry of Education played a role in documenting or amending historical narratives and whether ethnic minorities were consulted during that process.

24. The Committee had been informed that ethnic minorities were underrepresented in State institutions, even in Qusar District, where Lezgins accounted for 90 per cent of the population. It would be helpful if the delegation could provide data on the representation of minorities in the public sector, disaggregated by ethnic group, as well as information on any measures that would be taken to increase their representation. The State party might comment on reports that the Talysh People's Party had been banned in 1993 and that its members had faced repression and criminal prosecution. She would be interested to know whether the National Strategy for the Development of Social Services for 2022–2028 set out special measures to address indirect and structural discrimination. She would welcome statistics, disaggregated by ethnic group, on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and information on the more than 80 persons perceived to belong to that community who had been arrested in October 2017.

25. She would be interested to know how the State party managed the shuttle migration of Roma between Azerbaijan and Georgia and what measures were being taken to support Roma, including those involved in begging. In the light of reports that the Dom people were not taken into account in official projects relating to multiculturalism and were excluded from the education system, she would like to know whether any measures had been taken to support them and to address the problems that they faced, such as extreme poverty and unemployment. She would welcome data on child mortality among the Dom and, in particular, among the Garachi.

26. Lastly, she would like information on the number of persons of African descent living in Azerbaijan and on any training provided to police officers and other officials on the subject of racial discrimination.

27. **Ms. Stavrinaki** (Country Task Force) said that she would welcome information on any amendments to the Constitution or developments in case law that ensured the prohibition of both direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of national origin, colour or descent. It would be helpful if the delegation could provide examples of case law demonstrating how the domestic courts applied article 25 (3) of the Constitution in practice. She would also like to know how that article was applied in cases of alleged racial discrimination by private actors.

28. She would like more information on the content and added value of the bill on the prevention and elimination of racial discrimination, the status of the bill and the extent to which stakeholders, including ethnic minorities, had been consulted on it. She was interested to know whether the bill contained a definition of racial discrimination that was in line with article 1 of the Convention, whether it prohibited all forms of racial discrimination, both direct and indirect, and whether it covered intersectional discrimination. She would also like more information on the legislative amendments mentioned in paragraph 25 of the State party's report.

29. It would be useful if the delegation could provide examples of case law based on article 111.0.5 of the Criminal Code, addressing exploitation of the labour of members of a

racial group. She would like to learn about any other legal provisions or policies protecting workers against racial discrimination and abusive practices, whether the absolute ban on racial discrimination in employment mentioned in paragraph 29 of the State party's report covered discrimination on the basis of national origin, colour and descent and if there were any examples of case law demonstrating the application of the ban in practice. Given the State's obligation, under the Employment Act, to ensure that all persons enjoyed equal opportunities in the exercise of their right to free choice of labour and employment, irrespective of their race, she would like to know what monitoring mechanisms were in place and what data had been gathered through those mechanisms.

30. She would be interested to know how the governance mechanisms mentioned in paragraph 21 of the State party's report had contributed to the implementation of the Convention, why the State party had not adopted a national action plan against racial discrimination and whether it intended to do so. In response to the State party's claim that the low number of complaints of discrimination could be explained by the fact that Azerbaijan was a tolerant country, she wished to reiterate that no country was free from racial discrimination. She would welcome information on the number of complaints that had been considered under the Citizens' Appeals Act and the outcomes of those complaints, as well as the remedies available to non-citizens, including stateless persons. Had any steps had been taken to facilitate access to legal aid for victims of racial discrimination and to raise awareness among the population about the various forms of racial discrimination that were prohibited and about avenues for lodging complaints?

31. It would be helpful if the delegation could provide examples of cases in which the Convention had been applied directly by the courts. She would like to know whether any initiatives had been undertaken to raise awareness of the Convention among judges, legal professionals and potential victims of violations. She would welcome more information on the geographical distribution of the legal advice centres mentioned in paragraph 88 of the State party's report and the extent to which ethnic minorities made use of them. She would also appreciate information on the efforts made to implement the recommendation contained in paragraph 8 of the Committee's previous concluding observations ([CERD/C/AZE/CO/7-9](#)) on special measures for disadvantaged minority groups, including any special measures adopted in areas other than the preservation of the cultural heritage.

32. In view of the concerns expressed by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities about the passive attitude of the Ombudsman with regard to alleged violations of the rights of members of civil society and the downgrading of the Office of the Ombudsman to B status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, she would like information on any measures taken to strengthen the independence and effectiveness of that institution. She would appreciate updated information on the conditions governing the registration of civil society organizations dealing with the rights of ethnic minorities, as well as information on measures taken to implement judgments handed down by the European Court of Human Rights in order to expand civic space. She would be interested to know how many organizations dealing with the rights of groups protected by the Convention had been involved in the preparation of the State party's report and how those organizations had been selected. She would also like to know how the five organizations involved in the public council of the State Migration Service had been selected and to what extent women and the groups protected by the Convention were represented on the council.

33. She would welcome information on measures taken to ensure accountability for the use of abusive practices against human rights defenders and to protect members of the political opposition, human rights defenders and journalists against harassment, intimidation and other forms of violence. Lastly, she wondered what safeguards were in place to ensure that the State Security Service monitored violations of the rights of ethnic minorities and human rights defenders with impartiality and in accordance with the Convention.

34. **Mr. Kut** (Follow-up Coordinator) said that, under the procedure for follow-up on concluding observations, the State party had been requested to provide information on its implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 32 and 34 of the previous concluding observations. The Committee appreciated the fact that the State party had submitted that information – and its periodic report – in a timely manner.

35. With regard to the recommendation on identity papers and statelessness contained in paragraph 32 of the previous concluding observations, the Committee welcomed the fact that there were no longer any prerequisites for obtaining a birth certificate. It would appreciate more information on the application of the amendment that had been made to the Citizenship Act to facilitate the naturalization of stateless persons living in Azerbaijan.

36. With respect to the recommendation contained in paragraph 34 of the previous concluding observations, on migrant workers, although the follow-up information provided by the State party had been unsatisfactory, the issue had been addressed in greater detail in paragraphs 153 to 160 of the periodic report. He would leave it to his colleagues to assess the information provided. In the meantime, it would be helpful if the delegation could provide an update on the efforts being made to improve the work permit system.

37. **Ms. Tebie** said that she would like to know more about the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons. The Committee had received reports that many Armenians in Azerbaijan had been subjected to inhuman treatment or even killed. She would like to know how it was possible for such treatment to occur, given the existence of legislation prohibiting acts of genocide and apartheid, and what measures had been taken to address the situation. Regarding the translation of the Convention into Talysh and Lezgin, she would be interested to know what steps had been taken to disseminate the translated Convention among speakers of those languages; whether the translated Convention was used in schools and, if so, at what level of education; and whether there were plans to translate the Convention into other minority languages and to conduct awareness-raising campaigns.

38. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she would like to know what position the Convention occupied in the legal hierarchy and whether it could be applied directly by the courts. She would appreciate information on any training provided to justice officials on the application of the Convention.

39. **Mr. Diaby** said that he would like to know whether civil society organizations had been made aware of the fact that Azerbaijan had recognized the competence of the Committee to receive and consider individual communications. In view of reports that members of the executive branch had made public statements in which they had openly discriminated against Armenians and that some teachers had expressed similar views to their students, he wished to know whether those incidents had been investigated and whether the persons concerned had been removed from their posts. He wondered how many people in Azerbaijan were stateless or at risk of statelessness and whether the recent initiative whereby more than 200 people had been naturalized had been undertaken as part of a national plan to eradicate statelessness.

The meeting was suspended at 4.20 p.m. and resumed at 4.40 p.m.

40. **Mr. Mammadov** (Azerbaijan) said that the most recent population census had been conducted in 2019 but the results had not yet been published owing to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The State Statistics Committee was expected to publish the statistics in the following weeks and they could be provided to the Committee. The statistics would be disaggregated by rural and urban areas, and cover unemployment and employment rates, disaggregated by gender but not ethnicity. As at 1 February 2022, the country's population stood at 10,160,648. The 2009 census had shown that Azerbaijanis made up over 90 per cent of the country's population, with Lezgins representing 2 per cent, Armenians, Russians and Poles just over 1 per cent each and other ethnic groups less than 1 per cent of the population.

41. As at 1 July 2022, there were 168,155 foreign nationals and stateless persons in the country. A total of 286 immigrants had documents from other countries confirming their statelessness, 1,746 persons were under the protection of UNHCR and 46 persons had been officially registered as refugees. Muslims represented 96 per cent of the population. As part of the process to re-register religious institutions, a total of 992 institutions had been registered, 955 of them Islamic and 37 belonging to other religions. The social and economic position of the 50 ethnic groups in the country was not recorded.

42. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the human rights of all persons under international law was protected under article 25 of the Constitution and the 1991

Constitutional Act on State Independence. The Constitution also provided that the Convention was directly applicable in national law. The Ministry of Justice and relevant agencies had prepared a bill on the eradication of racial discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities for all persons in areas such as employment and economic and social development. It contained a definition of racial discrimination as direct and indirect discrimination, segregation and discrimination by association; it also set forth a prohibition against discrimination in employment and labour, explained the duty of employers to prevent discrimination in hiring and promotion and provided for the prevention of racial discrimination in areas such as education, access to housing and the service sector, protection for victims of racial discrimination and harsher punishment for related offences. It set out proposed amendments to the Criminal Code, including the introduction of articles on libel and insults and on the dissemination on the Internet of material that could be classified as racial discrimination. Criminal liability was established for inciting or facilitating acts of discrimination. Provisions were included to ensure implementation of the Convention. The rights to equal representation in State service and to equal opportunities in employment were also protected in the Constitution and the right to participate in elections, irrespective of ethnic group, was set out in the general law on elections and the Elections Code.

43. Training on all human rights conventions was provided to judges and candidates for the judiciary. A large number of non-governmental organizations that worked in the areas of solidarity and cultural, social and economic development relating to ethnic minority groups had been officially registered.

44. In 2022, the Office of the Ombudsman had proposed a legislative amendment to the constitutional law governing its status, empowering it to request information from any State agency on any alleged acts of discrimination within five days of a report being made, and setting out the obligation of the relevant agency to inform it of all measures taken in response to such acts.

45. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that there was no mention of ethnic groups on identity documents, nor was there any requirement concerning the presentation of identity documents during completion of the population census – the information could be provided orally.

46. **Mr. Mammadov** (Azerbaijan) asked for clarification of the question regarding the supposed rewriting of his country's history, which was a false allegation.

47. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that, under the legislation concerning education, all Azerbaijani citizens were guaranteed the right to basic compulsory education. A total of 388 schools in the country provided education in the languages of various ethnic minority groups: in Georgian for 1,128 pupils in 110 classes in 10 schools; in Lezgi for 8,005 pupils in the first to ninth grades of 95 schools; in Avar for 1,700 pupils in the first to fourth grades of 19 schools; in Talysh for 20,240 pupils in the first to fourth grades of 254 schools; in Kurdish for 31 pupils in 1 school; in Udi for 176 pupils in 3 schools; in Khinalug for 101 pupils in 1 school; in Tsahur for 441 pupils in 3 schools; and in Hebrew for 123 pupils in 2 schools.

48. In settlement areas for the Roma community, education was provided in 35 secondary schools for 892 school-age children from 657 families across seven districts: 492 in the first to fourth grades, 343 in the fifth to ninth grades and 57 in the ninth to eleventh grades.

49. Under a project of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, entitled “Azerbaijan – the address of tolerance”, Hebrew was taught in all grades of two secondary schools in Baku. Textbooks using the new curriculum had been produced for the Lezgin, Avar, Tsahur, Khinalug and Talysh languages for grades one to four and textbooks for grades five to nine and grade eleven had been translated into Georgian. Since 2019, four projects had been implemented within the framework of the grant competition on development and innovation in education, benefiting 200 pupils from ethnic minority groups.

50. In the 2020/21 academic year, 85 persons from Africa had enrolled in educational establishments in Azerbaijan, as had 286 in 2021/22. Under legislative decrees on grant provision for citizens of member states of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the

Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 44 persons from Africa had been awarded higher education grants in 2020/21 and 60 students had received such grants in 2021/22.

51. Since 2020, multiculturalism had been a compulsory subject in 54 higher education institutions, with the topics of religion and diversity covered as discrete modules. In 2022, over 5,000 teachers had participated in the classroom management service training programme, aimed at establishing a multicultural environment in the workplace.

52. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that places of worship for various religions had been built close to each other in the centre of Baku and the different groups coexisted harmoniously, respecting each other's traditions. Neither the Armenian church nor the Armenian religious library had been attacked. Families with mixed ethnic identities had no particular problems and job seekers were selected on the basis of their work history, not their ethnic background. The police force had members from ethnic minority groups, including a senior general lieutenant from the Lezgi community, and some 100 employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were from ethnic minority populations.

53. The approximately 6,000 persons belonging to the Roma community had access to land and work on an equal footing with Azerbaijani nationals, although, as in other parts of the world, they tended not to integrate with the rest of society. Most Roma children were enrolled in school. Administrative penalties were not imposed for begging, but fines amounting to approximately \$30 were issued to Roma families who forced their children to beg.

54. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that 3,140 members of the Roma community lived in Yevlakh and 2,800 lived in Agdash, 48 Roma families lived in Agsu and 53 families lived in Barda. They were all registered on the basis of their place of residence and were issued with national identity documents, which guaranteed their access to health-care and educational services on a par with other members of the population.

55. Some Roma families removed their children from school so that they could engage in begging. It was difficult to compile statistics because of their refusal to present identity documents and the continuous relocation of persons who engaged in begging.

56. National minorities enjoyed the right to education without discrimination based on their ethnic origin. According to the available statistics, 31 school-age Roma children were not enrolled in school because of their families' nomadic lifestyle and 88 failed to attend school on a regular basis. However, considerable progress had been made compared with previous years. Three students from Agdash, two from Barda and one from Qakh had been admitted to colleges and technical schools during the previous three years, and a student from Barda had been admitted to higher education.

57. A total of 4,955 citizens of African countries had entered between 1 January and 30 June 2022, and 4,876 had left the country during the same period. As at 12 August 2022, 87 citizens from Angola, South Africa, Ethiopia, Algeria, Cameroon, Kenya, Mauritius, Mauritania, Morocco, Egypt, Nigeria, the United Republic of Tanzania, Tunisia and Zimbabwe possessed valid work permits, 543 citizens of 32 African countries possessed temporary residence permits and 25 citizens of 6 African countries possessed permanent resident permits.

58. **Mr. Mammadov** (Azerbaijan) said that no specific registry of complaints concerning racial discrimination was maintained by the country's courts and other national institutions owing to the extremely low number of complaints and administrative proceedings. The authorities would be interested in hearing the Committee's recommendations on procedures for investigating the situation and ensuring that the number of complaints reflected the situation on the ground.

59. The Office of the Ombudsman had provided information that reflected the recommendations contained in the report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) adopted in March 2016. The Council of Europe and the European Union were cooperating with the Office with a view to expanding the Ombudsman's mandate. A research document had been prepared by foreign and local experts, and meetings had been held with civil society representatives to exchange opinions on the ECRI report. Since 2019, the Office of the Ombudsman had been participating in a joint European Union-Council of

Europe project aimed at improving access for victims of discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech to justice through non-judicial redress mechanisms.

60. The Office of the Ombudsman had organized numerous events throughout the country to promote equality, coexistence, tolerance and multicultural values and the inadmissibility of racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance. Civil society institutions composed of representatives of local religious communities and ethnic minorities had participated in local seminars, some of which had been attended by foreign experts. A number of employees of the Office of the Ombudsman and representatives of civil society institutions had successfully completed the Council of Europe Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals online course with a view to enhancing their skills in combating discrimination and promoting equality.

61. All necessary measures were being taken to ensure that the Office of the Ombudsman was upgraded to A status.

62. A recently promulgated law on the media guaranteed the right of all persons to seek, obtain, transmit and distribute information and prohibited State censorship of the media. It would be evaluated in the years ahead and amended and improved if necessary. The Government and the local authorities promoted media diversity and ethnic inclusiveness. Some 50 non-governmental organizations, cultural centres, charities and public associations that supported ethnic minorities worked closely with media entities. More than 15 newspapers and magazines were published in the languages of ethnic communities, including Talysh, Kurdish, Lezgin and Georgian. In addition, 30 newspapers and magazines were published in Russian. Television channels regularly broadcast material on the cultural life and ethnography of minorities, and local television and radio channels broadcast in a variety of languages in five regions with concentrations of ethnic minorities.

63. The Citizens' Appeals Act had been amended with a view to raising awareness of legal provisions aimed at protecting ethnic minorities and preventing discrimination. The Act regulated the right to appeal to State and municipal authorities concerning alleged violations of anti-discrimination legislation. The maximum delay for responses to appeals was 15 working days, and urgent appeals were processed within 24 hours. If citizens disagreed with the ruling on an appeal, they could file an administrative or judicial complaint under article 14 of the Act.

64. Stateless persons and foreigners who were permanently resident in the country were entitled to the benefits established by law for citizens, with the exception of the lifetime allowance for civil servants.

65. The rules on the admission of children to small group homes established by the State and municipalities prohibited discrimination based on race, religion, language or origin.

66. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the twelfth century Lezgi Mosque, previously known as the Ashour Mosque in honour of the noble family that had built it, had been placed on the list of cultural and historical monuments. Many citizens who had moved from the northern Caucasus to Baku during the nineteenth century oil boom had worshipped in the mosque, which accounted for its change in name, although it was not Islamic practice to name mosques after ethnic groups or nationalities. It was currently being restored at the expense of the Government.

67. **Ms. Chung**, noting the lack of statistics on economic conditions disaggregated by ethnic groups, pointed out that policies and actions aimed at improving education, medical care and other services should be based on accurate data.

68. It would be useful to know what criteria were used by the State party to define ethnic minority groups. The Committee would also appreciate information on the State party's support for the education of ethnic groups, including financial support and the assignment of teachers, especially in public schools.

69. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that the statement that non-integration of Roma communities was a widespread and typical phenomenon constituted racial profiling. She wished to know why Roma communities were concentrated in specific areas.

70. **Mr. Mammadov** (Azerbaijan) said that there were currently no specific statistics on national and ethnic minorities for economic or other purposes. He agreed, however, that such procedures would facilitate the development of more targeted programmes. He would provide more precise information on the criteria used to define ethnic groups in due course.

71. There had not been any intention to stereotype Roma communities; the reference to non-integration had been made in the context of describing the country's practice of promoting the integration of Roma.

72. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that schools attended by ethnic minorities were financed by the State. He would provide data concerning the number of teachers in due course.

73. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that members of Roma ethnic groups were not prosecuted on account of their ethnicity for forcing minors to beg in the streets. An administrative fine was imposed in such cases.

74. **Ms. Ali Al-Misnad** commended the State party on its provision of training courses and textbooks in a great variety of languages. However, no mention had been made in that context of the Armenian language.

75. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the Armenian language was accorded the same status as other languages.

76. **Mr. Diaby**, noting that, according to the State party, about 10 per cent of stateless persons had been naturalized in 2021, said that, under the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness (2014–2024), States had been urged to draw up a national plan. He wished to know whether the State party had already done so.

77. **Ms. Esseneme** reiterated her question as to whether the State party's judiciary was provided with initial and continuous training courses on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

78. **Ms. Tebie** asked whether the Convention had been translated into the Lezgin, Talysh and other languages, and whether it was incorporated into educational curricula.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.