



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 2878th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 21 April 2022, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Shepherd

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

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

Combined twelfth and thirteenth periodic reports of Estonia (continued)
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1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Estonia joined the meeting.*
2. **Ms. Tlakula** (Country Rapporteur) said that she would welcome information on the impact of the Welfare Development Plan 2016–2023, related activities and the stakeholders involved. She asked how many lawyers had received the training on legal aid mentioned in paragraph 210 of the report, what the content of that training was and whether immigrants could access legal aid regardless of their country of origin; if so, she wished to know how many had benefited from such assistance. It would be useful to have information on the impact of the 2014–2020 Integration Plan in terms of minimizing negative attitudes, increasing tolerance, promoting the integration of non-Estonians and migrants, improving the population’s knowledge of rights related to difference and different situations, and promoting the cultures and languages of minority groups other than Russian speakers. She wondered whether the implementation of the Integration Plan was affected negatively by the punitive approach of the Language Inspectorate, and she asked how the Inspectorate’s activities were monitored and what measures had been adopted to raise awareness of the Integration Plan among vulnerable groups. Statistics on the monitoring and evaluation of the State party’s previous integration plans would be welcome, along with statistics on the representation of ethnic minorities in the parliament, the judiciary and government bodies at the national, local and administrative levels. How many women elected to the parliament in 2019 belonged to ethnic minorities?
3. She would welcome an update on initiatives to improve minority groups’ access to employment and to eliminate disparities in employment and remuneration between Estonians and non-Estonians resulting from a lack of proficiency in the Estonian language. Noting that the Committee had previously recommended that the State party should increase its efforts for linguistic integration, including through professional language training, she said that an update on the implementation of the recommendation would be welcome. It would be useful to the Committee to know whether the State party agreed with the finding of the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights that strict language requirements in the labour market were often disproportionate and at times discriminatory and whether the State party would consider prohibiting such requirements.
4. She wished to hear the delegation’s views on whether the very small increase in the number of Roma children enrolled in schools since the State party had last come before the Committee indicated that the initiatives adopted to increase enrolment had not yielded the desired results. She asked whether the Government had investigated the causes of such low enrolment rates; what measures it had adopted to increase enrolment; what the composition, mandate and activities of the Advisory Committee for Roma Integration were; whether it had advised the relevant agencies on employment, education, housing and health care; and whether its work had produced positive results. Information on those results and on any proposals made by Roma organizations to ensure better integration in employment, education, housing and health care would be welcome, including an indication as to whether those proposals had been accepted. With regard to education more generally, what measures had been taken to provide adequate access to education for children from linguistic and ethnic minorities, including through instruction in their mother tongues?
5. The Committee would welcome statistics disaggregated by age and disability on the number of citizenship applications submitted between 2015 and 2021 by persons with undetermined citizenship, including an indication of how many such applications had been accepted. Details of any plans to abolish the requirement for language proficiency to acquire citizenship and to amend the legislation to allow children with undetermined citizenship aged between 15 and 18 to apply for Estonian citizenship would be welcome. She would also like to know whether all positions in the civil service were open to persons with undetermined citizenship and, if not, why, and she also wished to know the reason for any differences

between the rights of those who had acquired citizenship by naturalization and those who had acquired it by birth.

6. Information would be welcome on the measures implemented to uphold the principle of non-refoulement; to enable asylum seekers to lodge asylum applications and receive free legal aid; to absolve asylum seekers of any criminal liability for their illegal entry into the State party; to establish independent monitoring of the asylum system at border crossing points; and to improve living conditions at reception centres. The delegation was invited to indicate whether a comprehensive national strategy for refugee integration had been adopted and, if so, how it was implemented. An update on the integration of migrants, including asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons, in the areas of education, health care, employment and housing would be useful. In the light of reports of a resurgence in anti-migrant and xenophobic attacks, she said that the Committee would like to know whether a targeted action plan existed to combat racism, violence and intolerance, and how negative attitudes and discrimination against refugees would be addressed, particularly given the numbers of refugees entering the State party from Ukraine. The Committee would like to find out how many refugees had arrived from Ukraine, how many persons of African descent resided in the State party and how many of the latter had citizenship.

7. She wished to know how the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had impacted the persons most vulnerable to discrimination and groups protected under the Convention, and how the State party had protected ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples and non-citizens from the effects of the pandemic and from the discrimination, hate speech, stigmatization and socioeconomic effects that had arisen. She would welcome an update on efforts to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189); the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97); the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons; the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, as well as updates on activities relating to the Decade for People of African Descent, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the adoption of a national plan to combat racism and racial discrimination.

8. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** (Country Task Force) said that he would welcome information from the delegation on reported attempts to discontinue funding for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the area of human rights. The excessive emphasis placed on the Estonian language in the State party's integration efforts was cause for concern. The Committee would like to know how the requirement for 60 per cent of classes in schools to be conducted in Estonian was viewed by non-ethnic Estonians in general, and Russian-speaking Estonians in particular. He wished to know whether the State party had accepted the recommendation of the Estonian Institute of Human Rights to reduce language segregation in areas including education, the media and security. If so, he would like to know what steps had been taken, and if not, he wished to know why.

9. Noting that legal provisions that gave consumers the right to receive information and services in Estonian could lead to the dismissal of retail employees not proficient in the language and to fines for their employers, he asked whether the State party would consider removing such provisions and replacing them with more balanced ones allowing such information and services to be provided by a third party. He noted that proficiency in Estonian was not a requirement for military service and said that it would be of interest to know whether the State party considered that persons contributing to the Estonian economy by working in the country should receive similar treatment.

10. **Mr. Balcerzak** asked whether the number of refugees entering the State party from Ukraine was decreasing, how they could access State services online, whether those services were provided in Ukrainian and how the Government planned to provide education to school-age refugees from Ukraine in the short- and medium-term.

11. **Ms. Stavrinaki**, recalling that in its general recommendation No. 35 on combating racist hate speech the Committee provided useful guidance on the adoption of legislation that did not place disproportionate restrictions on the freedom of expression, said that it would be useful to examine the content of the rejected legislative amendment on hate speech, along

with information on the conditions for access to health care for the groups protected by the Convention. How did the State party define “urgent health care”?

12. **Mr. Guissé** said that the meaning of the term “undetermined citizenship” was unclear. The Committee would appreciate information on why such a large proportion of the State party’s population, including many children, fell into that category, as well as clarification of how persons residing in Estonia could acquire the nationality of other countries, as stated in paragraph 121 of the report.

13. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that the amendments to the Criminal Code currently before the parliament did not cover all types of conduct described in article 4 of the Convention, as they would fail to criminalize the dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or racial hatred, acts of violence or incitement to such acts, and the provision of assistance to racist activities. While incitement to racial hatred was established as an offence, the fact that it was punishable only if it posed a danger to the life or health of a person made prosecution virtually impossible. Even if the amendments were passed, the State party’s criminal legislation would continue to fall markedly short of the requirements under the Convention. Under the State party’s monist system of law, persons who felt that their rights under article 4 had been violated could nonetheless bring proceedings. It might be somewhat embarrassing for the Government if the matter was taken up by a court or brought before the Committee despite the absence of relevant legislation.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 and resumed at 11.10 a.m.

14. **Mr. Kommusaar** (Estonia) said that persons wishing to apply for Estonian citizenship must hold: a long-term residence permit or the right of permanent residence; have lived in Estonia, prior to submitting an application, for at least eight years, of which at least five years must be on a permanent basis; be proficient in the Estonian language; have passed the examination of knowledge of the Constitution and the Citizenship Act; have a permanent legal income; have a registered place of residence; and be loyal to the Estonian State. Applications were processed within six months of submission. For children under 15 years of age, citizenship applications could be filed by the parents or a legal guardian, provided they themselves were citizens of Estonia by birth or naturalization. Children who also held the citizenship of another State must renounce it within three years of attaining the age of 18 in order to retain Estonian citizenship. Children could also be granted citizenship if one of their parents or grandparents had been a resident of Estonia on 20 August 1991. When Estonian independence had been restored in 1991, the 1938 Citizenship Act had been re-adopted, and persons whose parents or grandparents had been citizens in Estonia prior to the Soviet occupation in 1940 had been granted automatic citizenship. Nearly 500,000 citizens of the former Soviet Union had had to decide whether they wished to acquire Russian or Estonian citizenship. The status of those who had not decided either way remained undetermined.

15. The proportion of persons with undetermined citizenship living in Estonia had been reduced from 32 per cent in 1992 to 4.9 per cent, or around 65,000 people. Between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2021, 3,414 persons with undetermined citizenship had filed citizenship applications; 3,056 of those requests had been granted. It was untrue that 50 per cent of all citizenship applications were rejected. Since November 2016, 4,343 persons had been granted citizenship and 213 applications had been rejected. The majority of persons who had been denied citizenship had had a criminal record or been former members of foreign armed forces.

16. The Internal Security Development Plan 2020–2030 aimed to improve the registration of applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection, expedite their integration and support those wishing to acquire Estonian citizenship in a longer-term perspective. Measures had been taken to disseminate information on the acquisition of citizenship, and Estonian-language classes and special integration courses for different target groups were provided free of charge. Estonian citizenship policy was fully compliant with international law. Accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness would not yield any additional benefits, as its provisions were less comprehensive than the rights currently enjoyed by the country’s residents with undetermined citizenship. Persons with undetermined citizenship were encouraged to apply for naturalization. The Government had not changed

its position with regard to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

17. The principle of non-refoulement of asylum seekers arriving at border-crossing points was fully respected. Asylum applications could be lodged at all police and border guard stations, and applicants were given comprehensive information on their rights and obligations and the relevant procedures, in a language they could understand, both orally and in writing. Asylum seekers had access to free legal aid and counsel at all stages of the asylum procedure, including at the appeals stage, and no applicant for international protection had ever been denied legal aid. Although asylum seekers were not held criminally liable for illegal entry into the territory, an application for international protection did not per se preclude the initiation of criminal proceedings. Proceedings might be opened to investigate the circumstances of a case and dropped later if an application for international protection was filed.

18. A series of measures had been taken to improve the living conditions of asylum seekers at reception centres, and those efforts would continue, to the extent made possible by the available budget. In 2021, 76 persons had applied for international protection and 46 people had been granted it; the majority of applicants had been from Afghanistan, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Belarus. Between 24 February and 28 April 2022, 159 persons had filed for international protection, including 13 Nigerians, 26 Russians, 72 Ukrainians and 5 Belarusians. As at 30 March 2022, eight people had been granted international protection. Between 1997 and 31 March 2022, 1,414 persons had applied for international protection; 344 persons had been granted refugee status and 257 persons had obtained subsidiary protection. As at 21 April 2022, 21,393 refugees from Ukraine had been granted temporary protection; 47,861 Ukrainian citizens had entered Estonia between 27 February and 21 April 2022, 15,579 of them in transit. Newly arrived Ukrainian citizens currently accounted for 2.41 per cent of the total population. They were provided with residence permits, work permits, social services, food, accommodation and psychosocial support.

19. **Ms. Limperk-Kütaru** (Estonia) said that the intention of the Estonian language proficiency requirement was neither to restrict the use of minority languages nor to be used against national minorities. Multilingualism not only meant that Estonian-language speakers were able to communicate in minority languages, but also that minority-language speakers should be fluent in Estonian, in line with the Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities. The official State language was not taught at the expense of national minority languages.

20. The use of Estonian and national minority languages was regulated by the Language Act, which also set forth requirements concerning the use of and proficiency in Estonian. State officials and local government employees, for example, must be proficient at a level required for the performance of their duties. Language proficiency in Estonian also formed part of professional qualifications. The Language Inspectorate was responsible for monitoring compliance with the Act; no fines had been imposed for violations of the Language Act since 2015. Instead, persons with insufficient language skills were ordered to acquire proficiency and given sufficient time to do so. Penalties were only imposed if proficiency was not acquired within the prescribed time. The Language Inspectorate provided advice on language learning opportunities and suitable language courses. Where there was reasonable doubt that a person could meet the language requirements, it could order an Estonian-language proficiency examination. Persons who passed the examination were entitled to compensation of tuition fees. The Language Act also provided that persons belonging to national minorities could communicate with State and local government authorities in their own language. A foreign language might be used if all parties to the proceedings agreed. In areas with large Russian-speaking communities, official government information was provided in Russian, Estonian, and often also in English.

21. Efforts were also made to improve the teaching of the native language and culture of pupils, as provided in the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act. In a context where the student population spoke more than 60 languages, it was important to strike a balance between the language teaching of the State language and of other languages. The Ministry of Education and Research was currently developing a curriculum for minority languages and cultures which would provide a more comprehensive framework for teaching

students' native languages and cultures within the formal education system. Over the years, demand for Estonian-language schools had increased. The Integration Monitor 2020 had revealed that only 11 per cent of parents preferred basic education schools where Russian was the single language of instruction. Most people considered that Estonian should be taught at the pre-primary level, supported the idea of children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds studying in the same classroom and believed that mixed study environments yielded better education outcomes. A majority also found Estonian-language teaching at upper secondary schools to present a competitive advantage in the labour market.

22. The right to equal access to education was guaranteed by law; basic and upper secondary education were provided free of charge. The Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act established the right to inclusive education, non-discrimination and equal access. Education was compulsory until the completion of basic education or attainment of the age of 17.

23. Special efforts were being made to protect the right to education of child refugees from Ukraine, more than 11,000 of whom had arrived in Estonia since late February 2022. Around 45 per cent of Ukrainian refugees aged 7 to 13 years old had enrolled in school. All unaccompanied minors had been provided with the necessary care and had access to formal education. Until the end of the 2021/22 academic year schools would focus on helping Ukrainian refugee children to adjust to their new environment and on promoting their mental health by allowing them to attend lessons remotely and ensuring that they had access to online learning materials in Ukrainian. Those who remained in Estonia in the long term would be progressively integrated into the education system. Schools had been encouraged to recruit additional support staff with knowledge of Ukrainian.

24. According to the available data, there were 63 students in basic education whose native language was Romany, and none in upper secondary education. However, it could not be concluded that there were no Roma students in upper secondary schools, since some students had perhaps chosen not to disclose their native language. The Ministry of Education and Research was working to expand the network of weekend schools for national minorities, and in 2020, a weekend school offering lessons in the Romany language for Roma children had opened in Tallinn. Training on Roma culture was provided to teachers every year to promote the integration of Roma children into school communities. According to figures from 2021, 27 per cent of Roma aged 15 years or older had completed secondary, vocational or higher education and 21 per cent of Roma were employed.

25. **Ms. Sepp** (Estonia) said that both unemployed and employed persons had access to Estonian language lessons through the public employment service. Online tools had been used to ensure the continuity of those lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic, and there had been an increase in Estonian language learning among employed persons in 2021.

26. The public employment service had taken steps to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the implementation of labour market measures, placing particular emphasis on supporting vulnerable groups and persons at risk of losing their jobs. In 2020, around 25,000 persons who had been registered as unemployed and whose native language was not Estonian had received assistance from the public employment service. Between 2019 and 2021, almost 300 jobseekers, many of whom lacked knowledge of Estonian, had found employment thanks to the regional job creation aid mentioned in the periodic report.

27. In 2020 and 2021, the employment and unemployment gaps between Estonians and non-Estonians had widened because there had been a higher concentration of non-Estonian workers in the economic sectors and geographic areas that had been hit hardest by the pandemic. The proportion of refugees who were employed had changed significantly as a result of the recent influx of Ukrainian refugees. At the start of 2022, there had been fewer than 400 beneficiaries of international protection in Estonia, of whom 80 had been in full-time employment. Since then, temporary protection had been granted to more than 20,000 Ukrainian refugees, of whom 2,000 were employed and 4,000 were registered as unemployed.

28. In order to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic, a short-time work scheme had been introduced on a temporary basis during the lockdown. The scheme was

considered to have helped avert the widespread loss of jobs and prevent significant worsening of the poverty rate.

29. Asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection were provided with private or shared apartments at accommodation centres with a maximum capacity of 100 persons. They could also apply for a one-off grant of approximately €900 that would help to cover the cost of finding private accommodation. Faced with the influx of Ukrainian refugees, the Government had managed to provide temporary accommodation for an additional 9,000 people by repurposing hotels and other facilities. It had also set up a real estate portal for Ukrainian refugees where private individuals could advertise rental housing.

30. Emergency health care consisted of services provided in situations where a failure to provide immediate treatment might result in death or permanent damage to health. It included treatment for COVID-19, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. All persons in Estonian territory were entitled to receive emergency health care. Persons who were applying for or had been granted international protection were entitled to necessary care, which was defined as all services deemed necessary by a health-care professional.

31. The Welfare Development Plan 2016–2023 covered a wide range of topics, including employment and equal rights. Within the framework of the Plan, training on equal treatment and the prevention of hate speech and hate crimes was provided twice a year to a group of lawyers, in cooperation with several NGOs. State legal assistance could be provided only by members of the Estonian Bar Association. In order to become a member, it was necessary to hold a master's degree in law and to pass a series of examinations. Members were also required to undergo continuous training.

32. **Ms. Reimaa** (Estonia) said that the majority of non-Estonians were either Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians who had arrived in Estonia under the settlement policy of the former Soviet Union or their descendants. Estonians accounted for 70 per cent of the population, Russians for 25 per cent and other ethnicities for 5 per cent. More than 900,000 people spoke Estonian as their native language. A large proportion of the population also spoke Russian.

33. The Advisory Committee for Roma Integration had 11 members, including 1 representative of Roma communities, 4 representatives of municipal authorities and 6 representatives of relevant government ministries. With the support of the European Commission, various measures had been taken to promote Roma integration and to build trust between the Roma and Estonian communities, such as the appointment of mediators to work with the Roma community in Valga, an initiative that had led to an increase in school attendance and enrolment among Roma children. There were plans to set up a Roma social centre in Valga in 2022.

34. Estonia supported the aims and principles of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and worked towards their implementation at the national and international levels. The Government did not intend to adopt a specific national action plan in that regard because it preferred a more general approach. The goals of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action had been incorporated into various national laws and policy documents, including the Equal Treatment Act and the consecutive integration plans. The country's human rights policy was focused on protecting the rights of vulnerable groups and promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Over the previous decade, Estonia had also expanded its collaboration with African countries and organizations and had cooperated within United Nations bodies with African countries on major issues such as access to education.

35. In 2021, there had been more than 1,700 Africans holding residence permits in Estonia, of whom 918 had come from Nigeria. There were also students from around the world in Estonia, including 1,700 students from Asia and more than 500 from Africa. An association of African students had been established in Tallinn. Foreign students had access to Estonian language classes free of charge and were provided with information and guidance on living and working in Estonia.

36. The Government had organized awareness-raising initiatives, including information days and training courses, within the framework of the 2014–2020 Integration Plan.

Measures had also been taken to promote the recruitment of non-Estonians in the public sector.

37. **Mr. Kärner** (Estonia) said that the Constitution stated that government posts should generally be filled by citizens of Estonia but could be filled by citizens of other States or stateless persons on an exceptional basis. Access to government posts for citizens of the European Union was provided for by European Union law. Nevertheless, core State functions must be performed by citizens of Estonia, who had an obligation to remain loyal to the State. The rules in place were consistent with article 1 (2) of the Convention, which stated that the Convention did not apply to distinctions, exclusions, restrictions or preferences made by a State party between citizens and non-citizens.

38. The Government had taken note of the list of international human rights treaties that had not yet been ratified by Estonia and would continue working towards the ratification of those that were relevant. Prisoners had access to Estonian language classes under the conditions described in the report, but they were under no obligation to attend such classes.

39. The bill regarding the definition of the offence of incitement to hatred had been passed by the parliament that day. However, the proposal to expand the definition to include activities other than those that resulted in danger to the life, health or property of a person had been omitted from the version of the bill that had ultimately been adopted. Nevertheless, many of the requirements set out in article 4 of the Convention were covered by existing legislation. For example, all acts of violence were punishable, regardless of the status of the victim, and meetings that were held with the aim of promoting racial hatred were prohibited. The question of how to define the offence of incitement to hatred was complex and could be approached in different ways, bearing in mind that some restrictions on the application of offences under national law were perfectly compatible with article 4 of the Convention. Lastly, although treaties ranked higher than national law in the hierarchy of legal norms, article 4 could not be applied directly by the courts.

40. **Mr. Siplane** (Estonia) said that serving in the Estonian military was a privilege but also an obligation. If a language requirement were introduced for conscripts, persons who belonged to ethnic minorities or who were from a non-Estonian background might claim a lack of proficiency in order to avoid military service. Nonetheless, it was important for soldiers to have sufficient language skills to fully apprehend commands given by their superiors, so language courses were offered to conscripts whose language abilities were lacking. Such courses greatly improved the language skills of conscripts from non-Estonian backgrounds, which in turn facilitated their access to the labour market.

41. **Ms. Tlakula** said that she would be grateful if the delegation could respond to her earlier questions about the presence of ethnic minorities in the military, the activities organized by the State party in the context of the International Decade for People of African Descent and the reason why Estonia had not participated in the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action at United Nations Headquarters in New York. While she welcomed the information provided on the number of African students in Estonia, she wished to know how many Estonian citizens were of African descent. With regard to the reception of Ukrainian refugees, she would be interested to learn whether the State party had taken any specific measures to protect women and child refugees from human trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

42. **Ms. Reimaa** (Estonia) said that she considered it regrettable that Estonia had not participated in the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration. She wished to reiterate that the Government was committed to the principles expounded in the Declaration and would continue to support the initiatives of African persons in Estonia, including the establishment of NGOs representing their interests.

43. **The Chair** said that it was a common misconception that the organization of activities in the context of the International Decade for People of African Descent and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action was the responsibility of civil society. In fact, States were equally responsible for promoting such activities, the purpose of which was to raise public awareness of the issues that currently affected persons of African descent.

44. **Mr. Kommusaar** (Estonia) said that all Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Estonia were immediately granted temporary protection and access to social services, the labour market, education and health-care services, including vaccination against COVID-19. Women and children made up the majority of the Ukrainian refugees who had arrived in Estonia. Employers had been informed of the regulations applicable to the employment of Ukrainian refugees, and the Unemployment Insurance Fund had established a separate portal to facilitate the refugees' access to the labour market. Special assistance, including psychological support, was available to refugee children, many of whom were already continuing their studies in Estonian schools. Preschool centres and schools were being encouraged to recruit Ukrainian teaching assistants.

45. **Mr. Kärner** (Estonia) said that the Government had set up a hotline to receive reports of suspected cases of trafficking in persons and had run various awareness-raising campaigns to combat it. The Ministry of Justice had issued new guidance on identifying trafficking victims for volunteers who were assisting in the reception of Ukrainian refugees.

46. **Mr. Siplane** (Estonia) said that the ethnicity of members of the armed forces was not recorded in the Government's registers. However, members of the military filled in a self-reporting questionnaire upon induction, and the percentage of conscripts who reported that their mother tongue was a language other than Estonian closely matched the proportion of persons whose first language was not Estonian in the population.

47. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that it was important for racial motivation to be classified as an aggravating circumstance in the State party's criminal law.

48. **Mr. Kärner** (Estonia) said that, while the criminal law did not explicitly establish racial motivation as an aggravating circumstance, police officers were required to record the motives of all offences. If racial hatred was the motive of an offence, it would be recorded as such, and corresponding statistics were compiled in that regard. Nonetheless, the Government remained open to promoting the amendment of the list of aggravating circumstances, if necessary.

49. **Mr. Kommusaar** (Estonia) said that at least 32 persons of African descent had acquired Estonian nationality.

50. **Ms. Saarsalu-Layachi** (Estonia) said that the Estonian authorities had engaged in various activities within the framework of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Decade for People of African Descent, including initiatives to promote cooperation with African partners in the area of sustainable development.

51. **Mr. Diaby** said that he would welcome further information on the measures envisaged by the State party to ensure that all NGOs had equal access to civic space, regardless of the mother tongue of their members, and on the measures adopted to reduce and prevent statelessness.

52. **The Chair** said that, since very little time remained before the scheduled close of the meeting, the delegation's replies to Mr. Diaby's questions would have to be submitted in writing. The Committee would take into account any replies received within 48 hours.

53. **Ms. Tlakula** said that she wished to thank the delegation for the information it had provided in response to the Committee's questions. It was clear from the interactive dialogue that three issues required particular attention from the State party, namely, statelessness, language proficiency requirements and the implementation of article 4 of the Convention. The task of dismantling racial discrimination required steadfastness, commitment and political will; the Committee urged the State party to continue to demonstrate those values.

54. **Ms. Saarsalu-Layachi** (Estonia), thanking the Committee members for their deep knowledge of and interest in the situation in Estonia, said that the Government remained fully committed to promoting and protecting human rights and combating racial discrimination in all its forms. The Estonian authorities would carefully consider the Committee's concluding observations, which would be translated into Estonian and made available online.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.