



# International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

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## Human Rights Committee 133rd session

### Summary record of the 3808th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 15 October 2021, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Pazartzis

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

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant**  
(continued)

*Third periodic report of Armenia (continued)* ([CCPR/C/ARM/3](#); [CCPR/C/ARM/Q/3](#);  
[CCPR/C/ARM/RQ/3](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Armenia joined the meeting.*
2. **Ms. Karapetyan** (Armenia) said that, under the 2019–2023 Strategy for the Prison and Probation Services, Vardashen Prison, the Central Prison Hospital and Yerevan-Kentron Prison would be closed and replaced with a new prison in Yerevan with capacity for 1,200 prisoners and 200 beds for persons needing medical treatment. Smaller-scale renovations to ensure inmates' health and dignity were under way in Nubarashen Prison and Vanadzor Prison.
3. Her Government was taking measures to ensure that persons with disabilities had access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, transport, information and communications, and other facilities and services open to the public. In relation to prisons, specifically, ramps had been built in the Central Prison Hospital, Armavir Prison and Hrazdan Prison and sanitary facilities in the Central Prison Hospital had been adapted. Furthermore, hearing aids, braille books, audiobooks, sign-language videos and other information materials were provided as needed and training was regularly organized for prison staff.
4. All prisons were provided with the medical equipment necessary for primary health care. Medical staff enjoyed good working conditions, which ultimately resulted in improved primary health care for inmates. The Government had taken steps to increase the number of psychologists in Armavir, Vanadzor, Artik and Hrazdan prisons. Under the strategy for preventing cases of death, self-harm and suicide in prisons, the circumstances surrounding such incidents were evaluated for the purposes of data collection, staff training and adaptation of operating procedures. Mental health and suicide risk assessment toolkits had been developed for the use of prison staff. Moreover, legislative amendments had prohibited punishment of inmates for self-harming.
5. To combat informal hierarchies among prisoners, the Government had criminalized some key aspects of criminal subcultures. To combat violence involving such hierarchies, all cases were investigated by the Special Investigative Service; to date, three cases had gone to court. In a related move, prison staff salaries had been raised by up to 13 per cent.
6. **Mr. Muhumuza** said that he would like to know if any specific reparation and reintegration mechanisms were in place for victims of trafficking in persons. He wished to know what efforts had been made to improve victims' access to justice and prevent further instances of trafficking, particularly the trafficking of minors. It would be interesting to hear how effective the Ministry of Health's labour inspections had been since the abolition of the State Labour Inspectorate, and what the scope of labour inspection tours was in terms of timing and coverage.
7. He hoped to hear what criteria law enforcement officials followed in differentiating asylum seekers from illegal entrants prior to detention especially with regard to establishing criminal liability. He would appreciate disaggregated, specific figures on how the funds allocated for refugees were spent.
8. Referring to paragraph 19 of the list of issues, he said that he wondered how the Constitutional Court decision had been implemented in respect of providing a genuine alternative to military service for conscientious objectors. It would be useful to hear what provisions of the new State Standard of General Education would specifically address and promote freedom of religion.
9. Lastly, he asked how many people of African descent lived in Armenia, and whether they enjoyed any special protection.
10. **Mr. Santos Pais** said that he would be interested to know if any member of parliament had ever been disqualified from holding office or investigated for corruption. He would

appreciate clarification as to whether the declarations of assets by members of parliament, judges and prosecutors were accessible to the public or only to the Corruption Prevention Commission.

11. He would like to know whether the new provisions on domestic and sexual violence also applied to unregistered marriages or partnerships. Was it the case that the courts had, to date, never imposed custodial sentences on perpetrators of domestic violence? He would appreciate some examples of the sentences handed down in such cases. He would be interested to hear the delegation's comments on the absence of any record of intrusive interviewing practices by law enforcement officers in domestic violence cases in light of the claims by civil society organizations that such practices were a major problem. Was it possible that women did not trust the authorities enough to file complaints about those practices? Had the courts imposed protective measures on perpetrators and, if so, had those measures been enforced? He would appreciate the delegation's views on the obstacles to women, in particular those with children, leaving their abuser, given that the regulations governing support systems and residence registration requirements made no exception for them. It would be useful to know the capacities and current occupancy rates of the various shelters and support centres. He wished to know when Armenia intended to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which it had signed in 2018.

12. He asked what procedural guarantees existed for detainees and whether they were being applied. He would be interested to hear the delegation's assessment of the use of the alternatives to detention introduced by the new Code of Criminal Procedure.

13. Referring to paragraphs 95 to 99 of the replies to the list of issues, he said that he hoped the delegation could clarify whether the law of 2019 providing for the voluntary early retirement of Constitutional Court judges had been applied and whether the draft amendments to article 213 of the Constitution – under which all judges appointed before a certain date would no longer have jurisdiction – would be enforced. He would be grateful if the delegation could confirm that due care had been taken, in the reforms of the judiciary and the Prosecutor's Office, to ensure their independence from the executive and legislative branches. Ideally, an independent body made up of judges and prosecutors elected by their peers should be responsible for judicial discipline. He asked if there were sufficient safeguards in place to prevent disciplinary actions against judges and prosecutors for minor offences or controversial interpretations of the law. It would be helpful to know whether decisions on the selection, disciplining, evaluation and permanent appointment, or dismissal, of judges and prosecutors were based on objective criteria explicitly provided for in law. Were judges and prosecutors appointed for life or for the duration of their contract? While it was clear that the Prosecutor General appointed prosecutors, it was unclear whether the Supreme Judicial Council appointed judges. He wished to know the numbers of prosecutors and judges and the gender balance in both roles.

14. He would appreciate clarification on the role of the Juvenile Justice Council: was it an advisory body to the Ministry of Justice on issues relating to children in conflict with the law? He would also like to know in which institutions juveniles in conflict with the law were kept, whether there had been any reforms of such institutions and, if so, what the main goal of the reforms had been. Details of social rehabilitation programmes and services available in the community for juveniles in conflict with the law would be welcome. He asked what measures were in place to uphold the best interests of children involved in cases of violence or sexual abuse and to ensure the safety of their testimony, and whether a psychologist was present when their testimony was being taken. He would appreciate more information on the training sessions organized for juvenile justice sector officials, judges and prosecutors; what subjects had been covered and how many participants had there been? Lastly, he asked what institutions were available for juveniles in need of State care, what sort of reforms those institutions had undergone, if any, and to what end.

15. **Mr. Zyberi** said that he wished to know whether the right to privacy had been violated by State-mandated electronic supervision measures applied between March and September 2020 in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Had the Government taken any steps to assess whether such intrusive measures had been warranted? Some reports claimed that the data gathered had been used to punish individuals for breach of the

restrictions rather than to prevent COVID-19 transmission. What had happened to the data gathered during that period? It would be useful to know what measures the Government had taken to ensure compliance with the requirements of proportionality, necessity and selection of less restrictive measures when available, as set out in the Committee's general comment No. 29 (2001) on derogations from provisions of the Covenant during a state of emergency and its statement on derogations from the Covenant in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic.

16. He wondered what specific disclosure obligations electoral law imposed concerning campaign financing, and what penalties, if any, could be imposed in cases of non-compliance by political parties or other political actors. It would be useful to hear about measures taken to ensure polling stations were fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

17. More information on the mandate and activities of the Women's Council in the field of gender equality would be helpful. Referring to paragraph 46 of the State party's report, he asked if the Legal Equality Board would have the competence to receive complaints from individuals who had been subjected to gender-based or other forms of discrimination, or if only the Human Rights Defender, courts and similar bodies were able to deal with such complaints.

18. **Mr. Furuya** said that he wished to know on what grounds the criminal cases against journalists in recent years had been brought and whether they satisfied the requirements set out in article 19 of the Covenant. It would be helpful to have information about cases in which journalists and media outlets had been sued for defamation.

19. He would be interested to learn whether the planned amendments to the law on freedom of assembly, as referred to in paragraph 118 of the State party's replies to the list of issues, had been adopted. He would like to know whether organizers of assemblies were required to notify or seek permission from the police or other authorities in advance. He would welcome information on the legal provisions or practical guidelines for law enforcement officials on the use of force when controlling crowds of people.

20. He wished to know what measures the State party had taken to combat early and forced marriage among the Yazidi and other people while respecting their religion and traditional way of life. He wondered whether corporal punishment in the home was criminalized as a form of domestic violence under the Criminal Code or whether any other legal framework was in place that prohibited such punishment. He would be interested to hear whether the State party had a mechanism, such as an independent body that received and examined complaints submitted by victims or their family members, for monitoring cases of violence against children in schools and other childcare institutions. Lastly, he asked why the Criminal Code did not explicitly prohibit discrimination and hate speech on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.50 a.m. and resumed at 11.10 a.m.*

21. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that progress had been made in identifying victims and prosecuting perpetrators of human trafficking as a result of the national strategy and action plan to combat trafficking in persons. A specialized department had been set up to deal solely with such issues.

22. **Ms. Kristina Hovhannisyan** (Armenia) said that the State provided comprehensive assistance to victims and potential victims of human trafficking in the form of psychosocial rehabilitation, shelters, medical care, legal aid, arrangements for safe return to their home country, where applicable, and lump-sum compensation of 250,000 Armenian drams. The budget allocation for such assistance had doubled since 2019. Training was provided to officials to prevent human trafficking and to identify, support and protect victims, especially minors, as part of the National Programme on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. A number of legislative reforms had been enacted as part of the Programme, including an amendment to the law on assistance to persons subjected to trafficking and exploitation so as to allow child victims of trafficking to receive financial assistance. A process was under way to amend the definition of forced labour whereby a labour inspectorate would be set up to monitor and conduct inspections of workplaces in all sectors of the economy.

23. **Ms. Mkrtumyan** (Armenia) said that medical care and forensic examinations of human trafficking victims were free of charge in Armenia.

24. **Ms. Karapetyan** (Armenia) said that a handbook for law enforcement officers on indicators for identifying trafficking victims had been published. It contained a set of criteria for identifying cases of human trafficking and guidance on how to work with potential victims. A handbook on detecting trafficking for front-line officers, including migration officials, health-care workers and consular staff, was also available. A set of guidelines on how to identify cases of forced labour had been drawn up for labour inspectors, and law enforcement officials received regular training on human trafficking from the police academies.

25. **Ms. Petrosyan** (Armenia) said that foreigners, including stateless persons, who entered the country illegally were not held criminally liable provided that they applied for asylum immediately on arrival, in accordance with article 329 (3) of the Armenian Criminal Code, which was in line with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Since 2018, 10 asylum applications had been received from persons who had entered the country illegally and applied for asylum.

26. In November 2019, the Government had approved a programme to provide refugees from Azerbaijan who had entered Armenia between 1988 and 1992 with certificates enabling them to purchase apartments. The Migration Service had received 300 applications and had granted 240 certificates. Once the programme had been completed in the capital, it would be implemented throughout the country. Funding of 1.4 billion drams for the programme for 2020–2024 had been approved. Increasing numbers of Azerbaijani refugees were being granted Armenian nationality, affording them greater protection. A budget of 13 million drams had been allocated to assist those refugees with their applications for Armenian nationality.

27. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that a draft law regulating the status of stateless persons was under discussion by government agencies. Regarding freedom of conscience and religion, a Constitutional Court decision had annulled various legal provisions that prohibited officials in the police, the military and the national security, penitentiary and rescue services from being members of religious organizations. Legislative amendments to bring the law on the police into line with that decision were currently pending adoption by parliament. Measures had been taken to raise awareness of freedom of conscience and belief among public officials. The history curriculum in schools had been changed and topics covered a range of different religions, not just the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Government did not gather separate statistics on persons of African descent, who enjoyed the same rights as all Armenians. There had been several cases where members of parliament had been prosecuted for corruption, including a high-profile case in 2020. Declarations of assets were collected by the Corruption Prevention Commission and were publicly available on its website, with the personal data redacted. Responding to a question posed by Mr. Santos Pais, the new provisions on domestic and sexual violence applied to all kinds of partnerships and relationships, not just spouses.

28. **Ms. Manandyan** (Armenia) said that the number of warnings and urgent intervention decisions issued and protective measures taken by the specialist unit for domestic violence had been increasing since 2018. In the first half of 2021, 267 warnings and 214 urgent intervention decisions had been issued, and two protective measures had been introduced.

29. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that, although much remained to be done, progress had been achieved on domestic violence since the entry into force in 2019 of the law on prevention of domestic violence and protection of persons subjected to domestic violence. Women's faith in the authorities was growing.

30. **Ms. Kristina Hovhannisyan** (Armenia) said that there were 10 domestic violence support centres, which meant that they were found in all regions of the country, and there were two domestic violence shelters, all of which were funded by the State. The centres operated hotlines for victims and persons at risk. In 2020, approximately 1,000 persons had received assistance from the support centres, and more than 130 women and children had been helped by the shelters. So far in 2021, approximately 1,100 persons had received help

from the centres and almost 100 women and children had benefited from the services of shelters.

31. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) remained on the Government's agenda. There had been attempts in the region to undermine the Convention, including talk of withdrawals, which had affected public opinion on potential ratification. The Ministry of Justice provided detailed information on the matter on its website, but further work was needed to address misguided perceptions of the Convention and its purpose. Since the new Criminal Code would only enter into force in January 2022, no statistics were available on the use of alternatives to detention. Judicial reforms were intended to increase public trust in the judiciary. The law on the voluntary early retirement of Constitutional Court judges had not been applied because the judges concerned had declined to take advantage of the opportunity to retire early.

32. The Constitution had been amended by parliament in accordance with the legally established procedure. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had prevented a planned referendum on amendments to article 213 from taking place, and the amendments had been passed by parliament. The new 12-year term of office for judges of the Constitutional Court would be applied to all such judges, including those who had been appointed prior to the entry into force of the fixed 12-year term in 2015. The European Commission for Democracy through Law had recommended a transitional period for the introduction of the changes, but parliament had decided to ensure equality of treatment rather than have two categories of judges.

33. The 2015 Constitution provided for the enhanced independence of the judiciary through the establishment of the Supreme Judicial Council. The Council oversaw the independence of the judiciary and had the final say in selecting, evaluating, disciplining and dismissing judges. Two subcommittees addressed ethical and disciplinary issues; each subcommittee was composed of six judges from different courts and two representatives of civil society organizations, who were selected through an open competitive process. The Council proposed candidates for appointment as judges to the President of Armenia; however, the President could not reject a candidate but only challenge procedural aspects of the proposed appointments.

34. **Mr. Mkrtchyan** (Armenia) said that 14 per cent of the 410 active prosecutors were women and there was a female deputy prosecutor general. The general requirements for the appointment of prosecutors were set out in article 33 (1) of the law on the Prosecutor's Office. Appointments were made from a list of candidates established through a competitive process that was held about once a year. The meetings of the commission that oversaw the process were recorded; the commission presented the list of recommended candidates to the Prosecutor General.

35. **Ms. Karapetyan** (Armenia) said that the Ministry of Justice had issued two reports on gender equality in the judiciary in 2021. The first report identified the causes and effects of gender disparities and proposed gender-responsive solutions. Approximately a quarter of judges and two presidents of chambers were women. Women were overrepresented among judicial assistants, however; around two-thirds of them were women. The second report contained a gender impact assessment of the Judicial Code and related legal instruments.

36. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that she chaired the Juvenile Justice Council, which was an advisory multi-stakeholder body composed of representatives of the relevant State institutions and government ministries, the police, civil society organizations and international organizations. It provided advice on policy issues and held meetings to discuss specific cases involving minors. The Ministry of Justice had a training centre that provided capacity-building for social workers and penitentiary and probation officers, which the Council could order to perform specific work. No convicted minors were currently serving sentences in penal institutions, though five minors who had been arrested were in pretrial detention in such institutions.

37. **Ms. Kristina Hovhannisyan** (Armenia) said that children in conflict with the law had access to the child protection facilities run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Three of the six child protection institutions could also provide overnight care for children

who were separated from their family. Children in conflict with the law or in difficult situations, and their families, also had access to psychosocial and legal support.

38. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that the training centre she had just mentioned provided specially designed educational programmes in penal institutions; the programmes included life skills, literacy and creative courses. A special curriculum for arrested or convicted minors had been introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2019.

39. **Ms. Karapetyan** (Armenia) said that the new Criminal Code established criminal liability for all the offences covered by the Istanbul Convention, including sexual activity with a child under 16 years of age and the coercion of children to engage in sexual activity. Sexual activity with a child under 12 years of age was treated as severely as rape and was punishable with a prison term of 26 years. For most forms of sexual violence, perpetration of the crime by a close relative of the victim was considered an aggravating circumstance. The understanding of sexual coercion had been expanded to include engagement in sexual activity without reasonable belief of consent, and that provision was also applicable to children between 16 and 18 years of age. Children under 16 years of age were considered incapable of consenting to sexual activity with an adult.

40. The crime of grooming had been introduced and was defined as an adult using information and communications technology to meet a child under 16 years of age. The offence of indecent assault had been expanded to include causing a child to view sexual acts, nudity or pornography or any other act intended to arouse sexual desire in a child. The Criminal Code also criminalized incitement of a child to engage in the creation of pornography or in prostitution. The perpetration of those offences by persons responsible for the education or care of a child was considered an aggravating circumstance, as was the use of information and communications technology to commit those offences. Criminal liability had been established for the creation, acquisition, sale or storage of child pornography using information and communications technology. Child exploitation and trafficking in children remained prohibited by the new Criminal Code.

41. **Ms. Kristina Hovhannisyan** (Armenia) said that a bill amending the law on the rights of the child was being drafted and would define the functions of those responsible for the prevention of corporal punishment and sexual exploitation. Concerning the family court, amendments had been drawn up that included the identification of children in difficult situations and defined the powers of local state bodies in that process. Once that legislative package had been adopted, the prevention and detection process would be clearly defined. Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse would lead to amendments to the law on the rights of the child and the Civil Code.

42. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said she agreed that the justification for derogations from international law during the state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, provided in a note verbale, could have been better articulated. The electronic supervision tool had not been considered a derogation from the right to privacy under article 17 of the Covenant because the law regulating the use of that tool had been adopted by parliament, rendering its introduction lawful. Discussion had taken place on the necessity and proportionality of the tool, which had led to its withdrawal and the amendment of the law. The data gathered by that tool were used to identify persons who were infected or at risk of infection by COVID-19. No sanctions had been implemented on the basis of those data. The related law included safeguards such as the establishment of a special commission to monitor use of the tool; the commission was composed of representatives of civil society, members of parliament and the national personal data protection agency. The commission had also overseen the destruction of data collected after withdrawal of the tool. Following the imposition of a state of emergency at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sanitary regulations had been guided by World Health Organization recommendations and the epidemiological situation. The impact of the measures taken under the derogation from international law was being assessed and support measures had been introduced to help the persons affected.

43. Amendments to the law on political parties included the requirement for political parties to report to the Corruption Prevention Commission on all aspects of campaign financing, including administrative and logistical costs. Another amendment would require

an amendment to the Criminal Code stipulating a penalty, ranging from a fine to up to one year's imprisonment, for political party officials who failed to report or to report accurately all required elements of their party's campaign financing.

44. Accessibility was still a problem in most polling stations in Armenia. She would provide written information to the Committee on the exact number of election polling stations that were not fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

45. **Ms. Kristina Hovhannisyan** (Armenia) said that the Women's Council was a national body headed by the Deputy Prime Minister and had been established with the aim of supporting the inclusion of women in the democratization process and ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women. Its objectives included countering violence, combating discrimination in all sectors of public life and promoting women's economic empowerment. The Council monitored the impact of State policies on the areas within its remit and welcomed the participation of representatives from stakeholder State bodies, NGOs and international organizations in its activities. It had held two meetings in 2021 at which it had discussed issues relating to gender policies.

46. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that the draft law on legal equality provided for the establishment of an Equality Council, which would act as an advisory body to the Human Rights Defender. The Council would be composed of at least seven members selected from among activists and scientists by the Human Rights Defender, according to the internal rules of the Office of the Human Rights Defender. The members would serve on a voluntary basis for a period of three years, with the possibility of having their term renewed once. The proposed mandate and functions of the Equality Council included assisting the Human Rights Defender in considering complaints, providing advisory opinions on violations identified, and, if necessary, submitting recommendations to the Office of the Human Rights Defender on the use of its powers.

47. The Council could also recommend that the Human Rights Defender should submit an *amicus curiae* brief to the Constitutional Court or the Court of Cassation in relation to a particular discrimination case. Currently, it was authorized to submit such briefs only in the area of human rights. The Equality Council would assist the Human Rights Defender in advising organizations and State and local self-governing bodies on raising awareness of all forms of discrimination, conducting research into discrimination and preparing the annual report of the Human Rights Defender.

48. Opinions were still divided on the Council's mandate and status. Some organizations supported an independent Equality Council, while others favoured one subordinate to the Human Rights Defender, given that the latter was well-established and enjoyed a high level of public trust.

49. Defamation in Armenia was a purely civil matter, and anyone could lodge a complaint through the individual complaints procedure. The unusually large number of defamation lawsuits in recent years was likely attributable to the freedom of speech restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although those might have been perceived as targeting journalists and human rights activists, their objective had been purely to prevent the spread of false information in the middle of a dangerous pandemic. She would send the Committee detailed written information and statistics on defamation cases, including those involving journalists.

50. **Ms. Manandyan** (Armenia) said that, under the law on freedom of assembly, it was not necessary to obtain permission to hold an assembly; a letter of notification was sufficient. Nor was it necessary to give notice of an assembly that formed spontaneously or in which fewer than 100 people were taking part. The Government recognized that it was important for police officers to exhibit a tolerant attitude towards assemblies. Pursuant to article 33 of the law, the police were authorized to terminate an assembly only when it unduly infringed the constitutional rights of others or undermined the public interest and could not be prevented by other means.

51. When the police restricted any human rights or freedoms, they were required to present the reasons and justification for doing so in easily understandable language and to explain the rights and responsibilities arising from the restriction. Article 29 of the law on



the police stipulated that, when using force, police officers were required to minimize the harm caused to the offender. There had been a number of demonstrations in which police officers had not acted in conformity with the law, leading to an internal official investigation and disciplinary action against some officers.

52. **The Chair** suggested that the delegation should submit written replies to the Committee's follow-up questions when the replies included detailed information or statistics.

53. **Mr. Muhumuza** said that it would be useful to know how many days an entrant had upon arrival at the Armenian border before being declared an illegal entrant; whether the entrant risked being arrested while applying for asylum after having missed the initial deadline; and at what stage it was clearly conveyed to the entrant that, beyond that deadline, he or she would no longer be able to apply for asylum.

54. **Mr. Gómez Martínez** said that he would welcome information on the findings of the investigation being carried out in Armenia into non-combat deaths in the armed forces and asked whether the Government had taken any measures to prevent such deaths. He wished to know whether the post of "sentence enforcement judge" existed in Armenia, and if not, whether the State party would consider it useful to legislate to introduce such a post.

55. **Mr. Santos Pais** said that he was interested in learning not only about legal reforms in Armenia but also about their practical implementation. The Committee's concluding observations could then be useful to the State party in carrying out further legislative reforms.

56. **Mr. El Haiba** asked whether the mandate of the Office of the Human Rights Defender was limited to the protection of human rights or also included their promotion, and whether it suffered from a lack of financial resources.

57. **Mr. Zyberi** said that it would be useful to know whether the provisions of the Covenant could be invoked directly before the Armenian courts. Although he lauded the fact that the percentage of women in the Armenian parliament had reached 34 per cent, when the minimum quota for each sex had been set at 30, it was unclear why that minimum had not been set at a figure closer to 50 per cent.

58. He asked why candidates for parliament had to be at least 25 years old, when such a rule risked excluding younger persons from participating in and providing their contributions to parliamentary debates. Given that restrictions were also placed on presidential candidates, it would be useful to have more information on the reasoning behind all such restrictions.

59. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that there was no sentence enforcement judge in Armenia, but there was a prosecutor who oversaw the processing of prisoners. The Office of the Human Rights Defender was mandated by law to provide not only for the protection but also the promotion of human rights, and the draft law on legal equality would entrust it with an even broader mandate. The Office was one of the few institutions whose budget financing could not be decreased at the start of a financial year. In fact, its budget had recently grown in order to provide for its role as the national torture prevention mechanism.

60. Her delegation would provide statistics in writing on cases in which the Covenant had been mentioned in Constitutional Court or Cassation Court decisions, and the clauses that had direct effect would be indicated. In the previous electoral cycle, the minimum representation of each sex in Parliament had been set at 25 per cent, whereas the previous year, it had been 20 per cent. Thus, steady progress was being made.

61. She had no information on the specific reasons for the age requirement for members of Parliament, but it was worth noting that, at the local level, the age requirement for candidates was only 18 years of age. Her delegation would provide written information to the Committee on all the remaining unanswered questions.

62. She expressed her appreciation to the Committee for an interesting, dynamic and constructive dialogue. Ensuring human rights was a priority for the Government of Armenia, which would continue to develop the country's human rights system, with particular emphasis on implementation.

63. **The Chair** said that she wished to thank the Armenian delegation for its constructive dialogue with the Committee and commended the State party for its ratification of the Second

Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, as well as for the constitutional reforms it had undertaken since 2015.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*