



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Distr.: General
23 February 2010
English
Original: French

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Seventy-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1861st MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva
on Wednesday, 27 February 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. DAH

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION
SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE
CONVENTION (agenda item 6) (*continued*)

Combined fifth to seventh periodic reports of Moldova (CERD/C/MDA/7;
HRI/CORE/1/Add.114; CERD/C/MDA/Q/7 (English only) and
CERD/C/MDA/Q/7/Add.1 (English and Russian only)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the Moldovan delegation took places at the Committee table.*
2. Ms. GONCEAROVA (Moldova) recalled that Moldova had ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1991, making it the first international human rights treaty to which Moldova had acceded after gaining its independence. The Bureau of Inter-Ethnic Relations was the Government body responsible for coordinating activities in the field covered by the Convention and, to that end, was working with central administrative bodies and local authorities and with Moldovan non-governmental organizations. In particular, it was responsible for drafting the report under consideration, which had been prepared with the participation of officials of relevant Government bodies and representatives of Moldovan civil society.
3. Since submission of the previous report, there had been a number of positive developments in the prevention of racial discrimination, including stabilization of inter-ethnic relations and the achievement of significant results with regard to respect for universally recognized human rights.
4. With regard to the legislative framework for protection against racial discrimination, the 1994 Constitution proclaimed the equality of all citizens before the law, regardless of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, political affiliation, wealth or social origin (art. 16), guaranteed non-nationals and stateless persons the same rights as nationals, subject to certain exceptions stipulated by law (art. 19) and enshrined the principle whereby, in the event of a difficulty of interpretation or a conflict of laws, the international instruments to which Moldova was party prevailed over domestic law (art.4).
5. According to the 2004 census, the Republic of Moldova had a population of 3,383,332 inhabitants, of whom 75.8 per cent were Moldovans, 8.4 per cent Ukrainians, 5.9 per cent Russians, 4.4 per cent Gagauzis, 2.2 per cent Romanians and 1.9 per cent Bulgarians. There were several other smaller ethnic or national minorities, dispersed throughout the national territory, namely, in declining order of numbers: Belarusians (around 5,000), Jews, Poles, Armenians, Germans, Tatars, Azeris, Georgians, Greeks, Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians (around 80).
6. According to statistics from the authorities of areas on the left bank of the Nistru (Transnistria), the population of those areas was some 555,000 persons, of whom 32 per cent were Moldovans, 29.1 per cent Ukrainians, 28.1 per cent Russians and 2.5 per cent Bulgarians, the remainder being Gagauzis, Belarusians, Germans, Jews and other small national or ethnic groups.
7. The Republic of Moldova had adopted a plan of action, entitled “Modernization of the nation – prosperity of the people, 2005-2009”, designed to promote harmony in inter-ethnic relations and guarantee the rights of all citizens to preserve, develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious

characteristics. To that end, there were plans to bring national legislation, especially laws on minority rights, into line with the relevant international norms, to preserve and develop the country's cultural and linguistic diversity and to create conditions for minorities to learn their native language in order to preserve their national spiritual values.

8. The Moldovan Government attached priority to application of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, ratified in 1996. As indicated in the report (CERD/C/MDA/7, paras. 237-250), the Advisory Committee responsible for monitoring implementation of the Framework Convention had already made two visits to Moldova, in 2001 and 2004. At the end of the second cycle of monitoring the implementation of the Framework Convention, the Advisory Committee, in its conclusions adopted in December 2004, and the Committee of Ministers, in its December 2005 resolution on the implementation of the Framework Convention by Moldova, had noted with satisfaction that relations among the various communities that made up Moldovan society were characterized by tolerance and mutual understanding, that Moldova had improved and extended its legislation and that the Government had made practical efforts to support national minorities in the fields of culture and education. A seminar on the application of the Framework Convention and on the conclusions adopted at the end of the second monitoring cycle had been held in Chisinau in May 2006, in which parliamentarians, civil servants and representatives of associations for the promotion of national minorities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had participated. The relevant Council of Europe instruments had also been translated and published in Moldovan, Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian and Roma.

9. A three-year plan of action to prepare for Moldova's integration in the European Union had been adopted in 2005. In a section on human rights and fundamental freedoms, the plan encouraged Moldovan authorities to guarantee the rights of people belonging to national minorities, take the necessary measures to implement the conclusions and recommendations of the organs of the Council of Europe responsible for monitoring implementation of the Framework Convention, draft and adopt laws prohibiting discrimination, in accordance with European norms and, lastly, take measures to resolve the conflict in Transnistria peacefully.

10. In that connection, on 11 July 2005 the Moldovan Parliament had adopted Act No. 103 on fundamental provisions concerning the special legal status of towns and cities on the left bank of the Nistru (Transnistria), aimed at giving the population of that region humanitarian, political, socio-economic and legal assistance to overcome the consequences of the conflict.

11. Measures taken by the Republic of Moldova to resolve the conflict in Transnistria included proposals, made in October 2007 by the President of the Republic aimed at launching a series of initiatives in such areas as agriculture, infrastructure creation, health, education and demilitarization of the region. Also in 2007, a governmental decree had been adopted to translate those initiatives into action by restoring mutual trust and security. Civil society initiatives to resolve the conflict peacefully and definitively had an important place in that process and tied in closely with the activities of the Bureau of Inter-Ethnic Relations, which was seeking the views of representatives of national minorities on the situation in Transnistria. Out of concern at the problems faced by eight schools that provided instruction in Moldovan using the Latin alphabet but were not recognized as State schools by the administration of the region (see written replies, para. 127), the Bureau of Inter-Ethnic Relations had sought assistance for those schools from the

international organizations present in Moldova, notably the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe.

12. In February 2008, the President of the Republic had taken part in a seminar organized by a Transnistria students association on the problems encountered by students from the eastern areas of the Republic, particularly their difficulties in learning Moldovan and the need to improve teaching of that language in the region.

13. In October 2007, a project entitled “Building bridges across the Nistru: joint action by journalists to resolve the conflict in Transnistria” had been launched, aimed at strengthening cooperation among journalists on both sides of the river and using the media to promote a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Lastly, monitoring the implementation in Transnistria of human rights instruments to which Moldova was a party continued to be problematic because of the situation in that region.

14. There was no party or organization in the Republic of Moldova that advocated racial discrimination or hatred towards a national, ethnic or religious community. National legislation was being revised to bring it into line with relevant international and European instruments. In particular, a special decision by Parliament in September 2007 had entrusted a working group of officials of various ministries and representatives of NGOs with studying efforts to prevent discrimination and combat racism by comparing the approaches taken in various countries. The working group had adopted recommendations addressed to the Government, in which it had emphasized the need to draft a national law against discrimination. Pursuant to that recommendation, the Government had promulgated a special ordinance on 21 January 2008 entrusting the Ministry of Justice with drafting such a law.

15. In October 2007, a delegation from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) had made a four-day visit to Moldova, during which it had held confidential talks with NGO representatives and civil servants active in the human rights field.

16. Since 2005, positive developments had been observed with regard to the policy of promoting the learning of Moldovan by national minorities, knowledge of the national language being viewed by the national authorities as decisive for their integration. During that period, a project offering classes in Moldovan to civil servants from national minorities had been launched in seven administrative and territorial entities with large concentrations of national minorities. The project had been planned and executed by the Bureau of Inter-Ethnic Relations in cooperation with local government bodies and the non-governmental organization IDIS Viitorul, with financial support from OSCE. A total of 274 civil servants had attended the classes.

17. In 2007, the Bureau of Inter-Ethnic Relations, the Academy of Sciences, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and IDIS Viitorul had begun work on drafting a national strategy for the linguistic integration of national minorities. In February 2008, the Moldovan Parliament had discussed the question of the social integration of minorities through learning the Moldovan language and had adopted a decision on setting up a special commission to study the problem. Lastly, the President of the Republic had launched an initiative to set up a centre specialized in teaching Moldovan to non-native speakers within one of the country’s higher education establishments.

18. Significant progress had been made in the phased integration of Roma into Moldovan society. Firstly, governmental decision No. 131 on measures to provide support to Roma, adopted in February 2001, had helped make the central

Government and local governments aware of the socio-economic difficulties and discrimination faced by members of that community. That had been followed by the promulgation of governmental decision No. 1453 of 21 December 2006 approving the plan of action in support of Roma for the period 2007-2010, which envisaged a series of activities in the fields of education, culture, health, employment and involvement of Roma in all spheres of public life. The plan had been drawn up by a working group composed of officials of the ministries concerned and representatives of Roma associations, whose proposals had been taken into account. The plan's implementation would be funded from the State budget and by international agencies.

19. According to the 2004 census, there were 12,271 Roma in the Republic of Moldova, representing 0.4 per cent of the total population. According to data from the Ministry of Information Development, as of 26 June 2007 most ethnic Gypsy Moldovan citizens (11,561 persons) had received identification documents from the competent authorities. As of 1 January 2008, there had been 12 Roma ethnic and cultural associations accredited by the Bureau of Inter-Ethnic Relations. In towns with large Roma populations, Roma associations had launched several projects with the participation of the Bureau of Inter-Ethnic Relations and the Ministry of Health, among others, and the support of international organizations. Those projects had involved, inter alia, helping members of the Roma minority to acquire the necessary skills to assume leadership positions in the social and health spheres, promoting healthy lifestyles among the Roma population and encouraging school attendance by Roma children. Specific measures had been taken to facilitate access to higher education institutions for Roma youth, particularly in 2007. Rules on student admissions had been adopted, under which 15 per cent of places were to be set aside for certain categories of applicants, including those belonging to the Roma minority.

20. With regard to migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, on 27 April 2006 the Government had adopted decision No. 448 approving the National Programme of Action on Migration and Asylum, aimed at preventing and containing illegal immigration, reducing its adverse consequences and strengthening the national asylum system.

21. In the Moldovan capital, Chisinau, a reception centre for refugees and asylum-seekers had been set up with support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

22. Civil society was becoming increasingly involved in promoting principles of equality, non-discrimination and tolerance. Organizations of people of African and Asian origin and refugees were active in society. With a national membership of 600, they organized various events each year, such as Refugee Day and Africa Day.

23. Ninety-six ethnic and cultural organizations, with members from 25 national minorities, enjoyed official status, having been formally recognized by the Bureau of Inter-Ethnic Relations. Locally, there were 250 registered non-governmental organizations.

24. All ethnic and cultural organizations were represented in the Coordinating Council of Public Ethnic and Cultural Organizations, which came under the authority of the Bureau of Inter-Ethnic Relations. The Bureau elected a 17-member governing body, in which organizations of Jews, Gypsies and Moldovans of African origin were represented.

25. Nationalities House acted as a cultural and information centre for intercultural organisations and, in that capacity, organized various activities for the preservation

of cultural and linguistic diversity in Moldova, such as seminars, festivals, Sunday classes or activities to mark International Mother Language Day.

26. Public bodies at all levels of government provided support to initiatives aimed at restoring the historical truth about the Holocaust. Since 2006, the issue of the genocide of Jews and Gypsies during the Second World War had been included in educational curricula, including higher education. In addition, classes on the culture and traditions of the various ethnic minorities and of the Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz and Bulgarian peoples were taught in primary schools.

27. On 29 January 2008, in an effort to promote inter-ethnic tolerance and prevent xenophobia and discrimination, the UNESCO National Commission and the Bureau of Inter-Ethnic Relations had organized a meeting of experts from eight countries in the city of Balti, the outcome of which had been the creation of a national coalition of Moldovan cities for civil solidarity and inter-ethnic harmony. The experts at the meeting had identified factors that gave rise to xenophobia and discrimination and had reflected on ways of creating conditions for establishing good inter-ethnic relations and solidarity among citizens. They had then outlined actions for promoting a spirit of tolerance and defined modalities for holding consultations that would permit the drafting of municipal programmes for improving inter-ethnic relations. They had also made provision for assisting disadvantaged children.

28. Lastly, her country's international credibility rested, inter alia, on efforts it had made nationally to implement the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. She recalled that, on the occasion of the Forty-fourth Conference on Security Policy, held in Munich, on 8 February 2008, the President of the Republic of Moldova had emphasized the inter-ethnic nature of Moldovan society and the fact that the Latin populations and those of Slavic and Turkish descent coexisted peacefully in his country.

29. Her Government planned to draw up and implement projects designed to ensure that the provisions of the Convention were applied effectively, in cooperation with NGOs and other civil society organizations that defended the rights of young people, migrants, refugees and Roma.

30. In conclusion, she invited members of the Committee to visit Moldova to see for themselves how the Convention and the recommendations made by them following the consideration of periodic reports were being implemented.

31. Mr. AMIR (Rapporteur for the Republic of Moldova) thanked the delegation for its combined fifth to seventh periodic reports, which had been drafted in accordance with the Committee's guidelines. He noted that the statistics on population did not tally with those presented by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), which reflected a greater proportion of Russians and Ukrainians in the population than did the official figures of the Republic of Moldova.

32. Turning to paragraphs 7 and 8 of the report, he noted that Moldovan was the official State language but that Russian was the language of inter-ethnic communication and was used in various areas of State and social life. The place occupied by Russian was no doubt explained by the fact that it was the mother tongue of the majority of non-nationals and was spoken by most members of national minorities.

33. With regard to religion, he wondered why, when the Constitution guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion, the State Service for Religious Issues had refused to accept the claim of the Muslim community on the grounds that the case as

presented did not meet the requirements of present legislation (para. 170 of the report). Was there a special law governing the Muslim religion? He also wondered why there were no Islamic schools in the State party, which seemed to presage the loss of a religion and even an ethnic group in Moldova.

34. Likewise, in paragraph 24 of the report, concerning cultural institutions that promoted the culture of particular ethnic minorities, the absence of reference to Muslims and their culture was regrettable and he wondered whether Turks and Mongols had completely disappeared from that region.

35. He would like to know more about the content of the many laws, listed in paragraph 38 of the report, governing the legal status of foreigners and stateless persons and asked the State party to provide statistics on the employment of such persons in Moldova.

36. In paragraph 49 of the report, the State party acknowledged that “law enforcement bodies and representatives of the authorities treat citizens belonging to national minorities, for instance the Roma/Gypsies, or people of African and Asian descent differently because they look dissimilar to the rest of the population”. Moreover, paragraph 77 stated that there had been complaints by citizens of Gypsy/Roma origin, claiming that the police exhibited bias towards them because of their features or skin colour. Noting that all cases involving complaints of racial discrimination had been closed because complainants had been unable to prove that they had suffered discrimination, he wondered whether the practice of racial profiling was also current in the justice system. In order to genuinely protect citizens’ rights and combat racial discrimination, the State party should review its judicial procedures and make the declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention.

37. According to paragraph 130 of the report, a new article had been added to the Criminal Code making the instigation of begging illegal. He wondered whether there was not some other way of combating that phenomenon, for instance by curbing poverty and the exclusion associated with it.

38. Although paragraph 164 stated that there had been no cases of violation of the right to property on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language or religion, he would like to know whether members of national minorities had access to housing as tenants or owners.

39. He noted that persons of Tatar origin, of whom there were 914 in Moldova, suffered discrimination on religious grounds because they were Muslims. Islam was an outstanding civilization, represented by over a billion human beings. It should not be equated with terrorism and the Tatar community should be allowed to worship freely.

40. He noted that in its resolution ResCMN (2003) 4, on implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Moldova, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe had expressed concern that the difficulties affecting members of disadvantaged national minorities persisted. Legislative changes should be made without delay, in consultation with the minorities concerned.

41. According to official Government figures, there were only some 12,000 Roma in Moldova, but other sources put their number at between 50,000 and 200,000. He would like to know what was the correct number. He also noted that the economic and social situation of the Roma community was precarious.

42. The Gagauzis, who accounted for 3.5 per cent of the population and lived mainly in the south of the country, had demanded and been granted autonomy for their region in 1994 but political tensions about the degree of autonomy seemed to have resurfaced between that community and the central Government. He would like to know more about that situation.

43. Mr. SICILIANOS noted that the draft law on racial discrimination (para. 79 of the report) was needed because it was difficult to apply the different provisions on the principle of non-discrimination that were scattered throughout Moldovan legislation. The draft law systematized anti-discrimination legislation, and he would like to hear more about it and about the Government's position on the issue.

44. With regard to language, some sources indicated that Ukrainian and Bulgarian minorities could not study in their own languages but only in Russian. He would welcome clarification in that regard.

45. The Rapporteur had said that, according to the latest official statistics, there were some 12,000 Roma in Moldova, while other sources put the number much higher. He would welcome further information in that regard. Moreover, according to an October 2007 report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the unemployment rate for the Roma minority was around 90 per cent, as was the illiteracy rate. He would like to know whether the UNDP report was correct.

46. He welcomed the adoption of the Action Plan on the Support of the Gypsies of Moldova (para. 76 of the report), but would like to know how effective its implementation had been and to receive more precise information on the subject.

47. Mr. KJAERUM requested more detailed information on the Action Plan on the Support of the Gypsies of Moldova and the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2004-2008 (para. 12 of the report). How had those plans been drawn up and had civil society and local authorities been involved in their drafting?

48. Concerning the National Human Rights Action Plan, article 12 of the report said that the State anticipated ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. He would like to know what was delaying ratification of the Charter, which seemed very pertinent for Moldova.

49. With regard to protection accorded to citizens and non-nationals, he noted that non-nationals could not be members of a political party or socio-political organization. He wished to know what such socio-political organizations were like and why non-nationals could not belong to them or to a political party. Moreover, non-nationals could not be employed in the public service. Did that restriction apply to the public service as a whole, including low-level jobs, where there would seem to be less justification for such a distinction?

50. According to some sources, anti-Semitism in Moldova was not expressed in the traditional media but mainly on the Internet. Had warnings been issued or fines imposed, pursuant to article 7 of the Act on Combating Extremist Activities, for disseminating such information on the Internet?

51. Paragraph 92 of Moldova's replies to the list of issues stated that the two cases involving the Spiritual Board of Muslims were currently before the courts. It appeared from the explanations given that Muslim organizations were generally recognized in the country but that the two organizations in question were not. He wished to know why they had not been recognized and what was the substance of the two cases.

52. Concerning representation of minorities in Parliament and the fact that minorities enjoyed proportional representation, he asked how the electoral system was structured, whether there was a system of electoral lists and whether ethnic origin was mentioned on those lists. He also wished to know what the situation was for people of mixed descent.

53. Mr. AVTONOMOV noted, with regard to the application of anti-discrimination legislation, that there had been no complaints of discrimination in certain areas, such as education or trade union activity. He drew the delegation's attention to the fact that the Committee's general position was that the absence of complaints of discrimination did not necessarily mean that no discrimination had occurred but could be attributable to fear of reprisals, ignorance of the law or other reasons. He would like to hear the delegation's views on the subject.

54. Concerning complaints by members of the Tatar community about the registration of Islam in Moldova, mentioned in paragraph 170 of the report, he asked what had prompted the authorities to withhold such registration.

55. Given that there had been a Yiddish-speaking Jewish community in Moldova for many years, he would like more information about that community, especially about the two Jewish schools mentioned in the written replies and whether they were sufficient to meet the needs of that community as a whole and whether any pupil could have access to them. He would also like to know more about Moldova's Roma community, particularly whether they were mainly sedentary or nomadic.

56. Mr. DIACONU said that the Republic of Moldova had made extraordinary progress in all areas since becoming independent in 1991. He welcomed the fact that the State party's periodic report contained an abundance of recent population data and that the authorities had created a large number of specialized human rights bodies, most notably the parliamentary Human Rights Committee, the Bureau of Inter-Ethnic Relations, the Centre for Human Rights and the Institute of Inter-Ethnic Studies. The country also had an Act on the rights of members of ethnic minorities (para. 11 of the report) and had taken specific actions benefiting Roma in the area of education.

57. Turning to the implementation of article 4 of the Convention, he noted that article 346 of the Criminal Code criminalized "deliberate actions that might cause ethnic or racial discord" (para. 4 of the report), making them punishable by a fine or a prison term. However, article 4 called on States parties to go further than that, by prohibiting racist organizations and condemning all organizations based on ideas or theories of superiority of one race.

58. The question of language rights in the State party was crucial, since it created political difficulties for the country and sometimes masked other contradictions in society. Contrary to what the Moldovan delegation had said, failure to respect the language rights of minorities could constitute racial discrimination if it was based on race or ethnic origin.

59. He was concerned about the situation in the Transnistria region (para. 29 of the report), which was de jure part of Moldova but de facto under the control of separatist authorities of the self-proclaimed Transnistria Republic. Although officially part of Moldovan territory, the region was not under the control of the national Government, while its independence was not recognized by the international community. The separatist authorities' violation of the rights of minorities and of the majority population living in Transnistria was a very serious issue requiring urgent resolution.

60. Like the Rapporteur for Moldova, he was also concerned that Tatars living in Moldova did not enjoy religious freedoms and were viewed as Mongols, in other words, as being intellectually and genetically impaired.

61. Mr. de GOUTTES, noting that the Transnistria region was de jure part of Moldova but de facto under the control of the separatist authorities of the self-proclaimed Transnistria Republic, which was not recognized by the international community, asked how, if it was not under the control of the national Government, the Moldovan authorities were able to ensure the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout that territory. He also wished to know whether the Moldovan authorities had put into effect the 2004 judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in the case *Ilasc and others v. Moldova and Russia*, concerning the conviction of four Moldovan nationals by a Transnistrian court.

62. With regard to offences of racial discrimination, he noted from paragraph 47 of the report that no discriminatory acts, as defined in the Convention, had been reported. However, the report also stated that there had been cases of non-compliance with the provisions of linguistic legislation and that citizens and communities sometimes treated those cases as racial discrimination. Moreover, paragraph 49 of the report stated that law enforcement bodies and representatives of the authorities treated citizens belonging to national minorities, for instance Roma/Gypsies, or people of African or Asian descent, differently. That constituted racial or ethnic discrimination and he wondered why no complaint on such grounds had been lodged. In that connection, he recalled that the absence of complaints was not necessarily a positive sign and might mean that the law was deficient in that area. He hoped that the new draft law on preventing and combating discrimination would be adopted soon.

63. He would also like clarification of reports from non-governmental organizations, notably the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, of pressure being put on judges by public authorities and of corruption among judicial authorities, as well as reports that the country was a transit point for illegal migrants, including female prostitution networks. Lastly, he would like information about the existence of racial profiling and about cases of police mistreatment of Roma, African and Asian migrants and Muslims.

64. Mr. PROSPER welcomed the authorities' adoption of an action plan to improve the lives of Roma and asked what measures the plan envisaged, especially for dealing with the rise in illiteracy among Roma children. How did Moldovan authorities plan to tackle that situation and did they envisage educating Roma parents about their children's educational needs? He also wished to know whether school curricula covered Roma history and whether the Ministry of Education had thought of introducing education in the Roma national language or maintaining bilingual education programmes. Could the delegation indicate whether there had been cases of racial discrimination and abuse against Roma by the police and whether a special body had been entrusted with those issues and, if not, why not?

65. Mr. PETER noted from paragraph 148 of the report that persons belonging to national minorities had proportional representation in Parliament. However, elected representatives did not represent the interests of the ethnic group to which they belonged but those of the party that had sponsored them. He asked what the Government had done or planned to do to promote the presence of members of minorities in Parliament and ultimately to enable them to defend the rights of their own communities.

66. Like Mr. Amir, he was concerned about religious discrimination, particularly against Muslims. According to information from NGOs and other sources, Muslim organizations faced numerous problems in applying for registration and there was no guarantee of their obtaining justice, especially when, as Mr. de Gouttes had pointed out, there were continuing doubts as to the independence and impartiality of the Moldovan justice system. Many NGOs claimed that the executive branch put pressure on the judiciary, which was so corrupt that the only authority above suspicion was the customs service.

67. He was also concerned that Islam was being equated with terrorism, as evidenced by the tendency to link Muslim spiritual leaders to terrorism. According to some reports, many municipalities in the State party went so far as to refuse Muslims permission to bury their dead, so that they faced discrimination right up to the grave. It would be useful to hear the delegation's views on those issues.

68. Mr. THORNBERRY queried the huge discrepancies between the data on the Roma population from the 2004 census and those provided by NGOs and wondered what questions people had been asked when the census had been conducted. In many countries, statistics on Roma frequently showed such differences and there was often a huge discrepancy between Government estimates and estimates from other sources. All in all, that testified to the general climate of discrimination against Roma that caused the latter not to mention their ethnic identity.

69. The Moldovan Government could use statistics gathered by private research institutes to shed light on the situation and compile the most accurate statistics possible on the Roma.

70. Noting from paragraph 41 of the State party's written replies that, as of June 2007, 11,561 ethnic Gypsy Moldovan citizens had received identification documents under the national passport system, he asked what information was included in those documents. According to paragraph 10 of the written replies, the authorities paid special attention in school curricula to the issues of the Holocaust and the genocide of the Jews and Gypsies during the period 1941-1944. He would like to know whether monuments erected to the memory of Holocaust victims paid tribute to Gypsies and Jews alike.

71. Ms. GONCEAROVA (Moldova) said that her delegation would answer the many questions put by Committee members at the next meeting.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.