



# Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

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## Committee against Torture Sixty-second session

### Summary record of the 1593rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 21 November 2017, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Modvig

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

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention** *(continued)*

*Sixth periodic report of Bulgaria (continued)* (CAT/C/BGR/6; CAT/C/BGR/QPR/6)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Bulgaria took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Prodanov** (Bulgaria) said that, owing to a number of difficulties encountered in the judicial reform process, it had not yet been possible to adopt a new version of the Criminal Code in which torture was a separate and specific offence. However, there were plans to develop a new criminal policy framework by the end of 2018 and to produce a new draft Criminal Code.
3. **Ms. Tsenova** (Bulgaria) said that, in view of the recommendations made by various international organizations, a definition of torture had been prepared for inclusion as a specific offence in the draft Criminal Code. However, NGOs had criticized elements of the proposals, and they were currently being reworked in the light of those criticisms.
4. **Mr. Sterk** (Bulgaria) said that the national preventive mechanism conducted regular visits to places of deprivation of liberty, including prisons, psychiatric institutions and refugee centres, and published reports on those visits on its website. In 2016, 58 such visits had been conducted, and 60 were planned for 2017. The mechanism issued recommendations following its visits. In 2017, for example, it had addressed a series of recommendations to the State Agency for Refugees.
5. The budget made available to the Office of the Ombudsman had increased gradually from around 2 million leva in 2014 to nearly 3 million leva in 2017. The Ombudsman was working to implement the recommendations of the Subcommittee on Accreditation, of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, with a view to ensuring full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles) and thus achieving “A” status in the forthcoming review.
6. **Ms. Petrova** (Bulgaria) said that the conduct of police officers was governed by the Ministry of the Interior Act. Its articles 85 to 88, which had been in force since July 2014, specified the circumstances in which police officers could use physical force and auxiliary devices, including firearms. The provisions in question were based on the principles of necessity and proportionality. In addition, they met the standards of absolute necessity established by the European Court of Human Rights. Lethal force could be used only in very limited circumstances and as a measure of last resort.
7. Complaints against the police were handled in accordance with established procedure. In that connection, the Ministry of the Interior had a standing commission on human rights and police ethics, which had a consultative role. The number of complaints made against the police had fallen in almost all categories between 2014 and 2016. Disciplinary sanctions could be imposed on police officers found to have committed a disciplinary offence. If a police officer was alleged to have committed a criminal offence, proceedings were initiated in accordance with the Code of Criminal Procedure. In such cases, the fact that the perpetrator was a public official was considered to be an aggravating circumstance, which entailed higher penalties. Such cases were handled by specialized investigating judges. The Ministry of the Interior and the Prosecution Service had worked together to produce a road map for improving the complaints procedure. It had been suggested that all complaints relating to articles 2 and 3 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) should automatically be referred to the Prosecution Service so that a pretrial investigation could be initiated.
8. The use of coercion to extract a confession, testimony or any other information was a serious offence punishable by a term of imprisonment of between 3 and 10 years and the loss of the right to serve as a public official. The Code of Criminal Procedure established procedural guarantees for pretrial detainees, including the right to be questioned before a

judge and the right to withdraw a confession at any stage of the trial proceedings, and a set of rules regarding the relative probative value of different categories of evidence.

9. In 2017, the Ministry of the Interior had introduced new regulations concerning the organization of integrity tests for police officers. In addition, video surveillance cameras had been installed at police stations. Persons held in police custody enjoyed various rights, including the constitutional right not to be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and the rights set forth in the Ministry of the Interior Act. The rights of persons held in police custody had been clarified in an instruction issued in 2015. Leaflets containing information on those rights were available in a number of languages, and persons taken into custody were required to sign a declaration to confirm that they had been informed of their rights. The Ministry of the Interior worked closely with the National Legal Aid Bureau, and no complaints had been received of police officers obstructing the provision of legal aid. Pretrial detainees and convicted prisoners underwent thorough medical examinations, and first aid was available to persons held in police custody.

10. **Ms. Radkovska** (Bulgaria) said that all persons placed in detention underwent an initial medical examination. If, during that examination, evidence came to light that a person had been subjected to violence, that evidence was duly recorded, any necessary medical care was provided, and the competent prosecutor was immediately notified of the situation. In 2015, all investigative detention centres and prisons had begun to maintain registers of traumatic injuries, and training was provided on the maintenance of those registers. The medical records of detainees and prisoners were confidential.

11. Prisoners underwent a routine medical examination at least once a year, and new prisoners were screened for tuberculosis. Prisoners were covered by the State health insurance scheme. They had access to anonymous and confidential HIV testing and associated counselling services and could receive antiretroviral treatment at external medical facilities. In 2016, over 1,750 prisoners had undergone HIV testing and over 1,400 had been tested for sexually transmitted infections. Ambulances were called in the event of an emergency. There were 114 permanent medical staff working in the country's various prisons and investigative detention facilities, although the provision of health-care services had been outsourced at certain facilities. External medical specialists also visited prisons and investigative detention facilities to offer specialized health-care services.

12. **Ms. Tsenova** (Bulgaria) said that, in 2016-2017, the National Institute of Justice had organized three seminars and three workshops on domestic violence, and 54 magistrates, judges and prosecutors had participated. The training materials used in those seminars and workshops had been compiled into a handbook. In addition, a series of online training courses on topics relating to domestic violence had been organized for magistrates.

13. **Ms. Petrova** (Bulgaria) said that the curriculum of the Academy of the Ministry of the Interior covered all relevant international and regional instruments and standards, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. Emphasis was placed on the protection of the right to life and the principle of non-discrimination. Over the previous year, the Academy had held training courses for students and employees on a range of subjects, including human rights protection. Every year, the Police Faculty of the Academy awarded bachelor's degrees to around 120 students and master's degrees to around 100. In the 2016/17 academic year, approximately 3,000 police officers had undergone training at dedicated centres in Pazardzhik, Varna and Kazanlak. The Academy offered training courses on the prevention of discrimination and had issued two handbooks on the subject. Investigative police officers were offered more specialized training, including a course on how to interview minors.

14. **Mr. Prodanov** (Bulgaria) said that women were well represented among prison staff. In recent years, there had been a substantial improvement in the material conditions in Bulgarian prisons. The problem of violence against prisoners had been overcome, as had been noted by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT). Bulgaria had only one remaining underground investigative detention facility, in Gabrovo. There were plans to close that facility and to

open a larger, above-ground facility in nearby Veliko Tarnovo, which would serve both towns.

15. Solitary confinement was not imposed on minors, migrants or refugees. It was only applied as a last resort, for no more than 14 days, and only if the person deprived of liberty had attempted to escape, had physically threatened staff or had been found with drugs or firearms. The conditions in solitary confinement cells had been improved, with running water and sanitary facilities available almost everywhere. Twenty-four-hour shifts were only the practice in a few units and were designed to accommodate staff who had to commute long distances. When handcuffs were used in non-prison hospitals, it was usually because the hospital had asked for them to be used out of concern for the security of its staff. Prisoners could only be handcuffed when they were in a room without bars on the windows. The alternative was to have a guard inside the room, which would breach the prisoner's right to privacy.

16. **Ms. Radkovska** (Bulgaria) said that, despite budget restrictions, the General Directorate for the Execution of Sentences had prioritized the improvement of detention conditions to bring them into line with the latest CPT recommendations. Under new provisions, the living space in dormitories could not be less than 4 m<sup>2</sup> per inmate, excluding sanitary facilities. Based on the 4 m<sup>2</sup> standard, the overall capacity of places of deprivation of liberty was 9,022, far higher than the current prison population of 7,048. The prison in Sofia was composed of three buildings under different regimes, none of which was over capacity. The prison had never housed as many inmates as the number cited by the Committee. The authorities had successfully undertaken a very ambitious renovation plan, under which several prisons and prison hostels had been renovated and several new detention centres built. Thanks to Norway Grants, a closed prison hostel with a capacity of 450 had been opened in Burgas in March 2017. More activities were planned under the next instalment of Norway Grants, in particular the construction of a new prison in Kremikovtzi in line with all European standards and recommendations.

17. **Ms. Tsenova** (Bulgaria) said that, as part of the judicial reform initiated by the National Assembly in December 2015, the Supreme Judicial Council had been divided into a main body and two colleges, one each for judges and prosecutors. The colleges were responsible for appointments, career development, appraisals, disciplinary sanctions and dismissals. Depending on their status in the Council, members were elected either by parliament or their peers. The Judicial System Act had been adopted in 2016 to introduce objective appraisals of judicial staff and ensure fair and transparent promotions. The Inspectorate of the Supreme Judicial Council had been designated in 2017 to verify the integrity of judges and prosecutors and ensure that there were no conflicts of interest. Software enabling the random allocation of cases had been introduced in all courts in October 2015.

18. All government institutions were committed to tackling violence against women. The authorities were working on legal amendments to incorporate the principles of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence into domestic law. Consideration was being given to amending the definition of gender-based violence, extending protection to more categories of people, introducing measures to improve the implementation of protection measures and developing prevention and victim protection schemes. In addition, there were plans to establish a national body to coordinate, implement, monitor and evaluate policies and measures on the prevention of domestic violence, as well as specialized protection services not only for women victims and their children but also for any person subjected to domestic or gender-based violence. As far as criminal law was concerned, the goal was to guarantee comprehensive protection by introducing new offences, including persecution and genital mutilation, and by making racist and xenophobic motivations aggravating circumstances of domestic or gender-based violence. Regarding violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, legislators were considering expanding the scope of some criminal provisions to make incitement to discrimination on grounds of sex, sexual orientation or gender identity an offence. Furthermore, some offences would be defined as *ex officio* offences so that the authorities could prosecute cases without the victim having to file a complaint. The Code of

Criminal Procedure would be amended to introduce additional protection measures for victims.

19. **Mr. Berner** (Bulgaria) said that there had been times in 2015 and 2016 when specialized facilities for the temporary accommodation of foreign nationals run by the Migration Directorate had been at 120 per cent capacity, but that was no longer the case. In fact, those facilities were currently less than 40 per cent full, while centres run by the State Agency for Refugees had thousands of free spaces. The Elhovo distribution centre was closed for repairs, so foreign nationals under coercive administrative measures were held in Sofia and Lyubimets. The Ministry of the Interior was taking advantage of the currently low migration pressure to improve the living conditions in reception facilities, including by installing washing machines and dryers and providing stocks of medicines.

20. Bulgaria strictly complied with the principle of non-refoulement and its obligations under international humanitarian law, with the support of various partners. Any foreign national had access to the territory of Bulgaria and could apply for international protection or asylum. Applications for protection could be filed with the State Agency for Refugees, the border police or other government agencies, or at detention centres. The case of Mr. Abdullah Büyük had not been treated any differently to those of other foreign nationals who had no legal grounds to remain in Bulgaria. His extradition had been denied, but his asylum application had been rejected as groundless. He could have sought other types of protection, in which case he would have been registered with the State Agency for Refugees and afforded certain rights, but had failed to do so, despite having been informed of the options available to him and of his right to legal assistance. The protection of human rights was a key concern of the police and border guards when dealing with migrants and asylum seekers. Nevertheless, any complaints of violence could be lodged with the General Directorate of the Border Police or the Internal Security Directorate. In the 2015-2016 period, eight cases had been brought to the General Directorate, leading to disciplinary sanctions in two cases, and a further eight cases had been brought to the Internal Security Directorate, of which two had been referred for prosecution. The authorities strongly condemned any attempts by vigilante groups to patrol the borders and took all appropriate measures to deal with them. There had not been any reports of violence at the border since the Prosecutor's Office had laid charges in a previous case.

21. **Ms. Spassova** (Bulgaria) said that the best interest of the child was the guiding principle in determining the protection needs of unaccompanied minors or children separated from their families. One significant challenge was to identify such children and place them separately from adults. Plans to establish a centre for the temporary accommodation of unaccompanied minors were part of a targeted policy on foreign children and were a good example of responsibility-sharing between the State and NGOs. Bulgaria recognized the need for joint, long-term efforts not only at the national level but also as part of a common European Union policy.

22. **Ms. Dimitrova-Childress** (Bulgaria) said that the Roma were a priority at-risk group under the national anti-trafficking strategy, which was rolled out by the local anti-trafficking commissions in cooperation with Roma health mediators. The National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings was conducting a mapping study in five marginalized communities with a view to identifying key factors of vulnerability, risk profiles, main destination countries, and potential and actual cases of exploitation. The results of the study would help the Commission to better target prevention and information campaigns at Roma and other vulnerable communities.

23. The Anti-Trafficking Act provided for specialized assistance for victims of trafficking. For example, the Commission, jointly with NGOs, operated five shelters for victims in three cities. The first facility for child victims had opened in July 2017, where services included psychological, legal, educational and humanitarian assistance. Two child victims had recently been placed there and would follow individual education programmes after the initial crisis intervention. Over 20 women victims had benefited from the shelters and services in 2016, while 17 currently received assistance. In addition to the positive impact on reintegration, the assistance also led to the prosecution of traffickers. Indeed, 70 per cent of women victims who received assistance cooperated with the investigative authorities. Aside from the shelters, there were also 22 State-funded crisis centres for

victims nationwide. Child victims were assigned a paediatrician and received a full medical examination upon admission to a crisis centre. No victim of trafficking had ever been denied assistance due to a lack of capacity.

24. Regarding the early identification of victims of trafficking among migrants, it should be noted that Bulgaria was primarily a country of transit. Tailored measures had nonetheless been included in all relevant action plans since 2015. In 2016, social workers, interviewers and interpreters of the State Agency for Refugees had been trained in the early identification of victims. In addition, the national referral mechanism provided indicators for front-line identification. In October 2017, an information campaign had been run in reception centres in Sofia and Busmantsi using video material in five languages.

25. **Ms. Tsenova** (Bulgaria) said that compensation was regulated by the Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crimes Act, which had been amended in 2016 to include provisions of Directive 2012/12/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union on establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. Under the revised Act, measures were taken to ensure victims' awareness of the counselling services and practical assistance available to them. Steps had been taken to expand the range of crimes for which compensation would be provided by the State. The effectiveness of financial compensation schemes, particularly those related to the payment of child maintenance, had been improved. Efforts were also being made to broaden cooperation with NGOs for the provision of counselling and support to those affected by crime.

26. The juvenile justice system was currently under review in order to bring juvenile criminal policy into line with international standards. A bill was being prepared on deferring criminal punishment for minors and imposing corrective measures instead. The relevant amendments would also be made to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure. The bill was intended to encourage compliant behaviour in young offenders and ensure they were integrated into society through enrolment in formal education. Upon adoption of the new bill, the Antisocial Behaviour Act of 1958 would be repealed, and a new body would be established, under the Ministry of Justice, to oversee implementation of the new legislation.

27. **Mr. Berner** (Bulgaria) said that, with regard to striking a balance between counter-terrorism activities and the protection of human rights, fundamental civil rights from which there could be no derogation were enshrined in the Constitution of Bulgaria. The enjoyment of other rights could, however, be temporarily restricted during a state of emergency. Legislative steps had also been taken to guarantee the protection of privacy and personal data in the fight against terrorism.

28. **Ms. Kostadinova** (Bulgaria) said that reform of the mental health-care system had been initiated in 2009. All psychiatric institutions for children had been closed down and replaced by community-based social services. Other specialized institutions for children were also being replaced, and similar measures were being taken with regard to institutions for adults with disabilities. An action plan in that regard was due to be adopted at the end of 2017. Civil society representatives had been involved at all stages of the reform process. The new community-based services, which included sheltered housing and social support for families, were monitored by the Ombudsman. The provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities were being incorporated into domestic legislation, and the Government remained fully committed to working with the United Nations treaty bodies, regional mechanisms and NGOs to ensure that all the necessary changes were made to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. Steps were being taken to prevent corruption in the assessment of individual eligibility for disability benefits, whereby medical assessments would be performed separately to the assessment of capacity to work.

29. Physical abuse, including corporal punishment, and emotional abuse were prohibited under the Child Protection Act, the Family Code and the Protection against Domestic Violence Act. Several awareness-raising campaigns had been run to advocate for the prevention of violence against children. Child labour was prohibited and child protection measures, particularly against trafficking and exploitation, were monitored by the State Agency for Child Protection. Cases of trafficking in persons were always reported to the

Prosecutor's Office for investigation. A total of 23 crisis centres had been set up for victims of violence and trafficking. Efforts were also ongoing to identify street children and child beggars, and to provide them with shelter and education.

30. **Ms. Racu** (Country Rapporteur) requested clarification on whether the State party intended to incorporate the definition of torture, as found in article 1 of the Convention, into its criminal law. She asked how often places of police detention were subjected to independent inspections, and whether there was any intention to increase the frequency of such inspections, since the majority of complaints of ill-treatment concerned detention in police custody. She wished to know whether the Office of the Ombudsman had sufficient human resources at its disposal to exercise its core mandate. The State party's cooperation with civil society was commendable, and further efforts should be made to ensure NGO access was granted to psychiatric institutions and places of detention. With regard to fundamental legal safeguards, she wished to know if the right to counsel was guaranteed, and what measures the State party was taking to monitor the effectiveness of legal aid, in particular at the initial stages of police custody and administrative detention.

31. More information would be welcome on how medical confidentiality and the early identification and documentation of injuries or ill-treatment were ensured, and on any measures taken to protect prisoners who had sustained injuries, especially considering the increase in the number of complaints of excessive use of force in detention facilities. The Committee would also appreciate further information on the situation of minors remanded in police custody, and in particular whether there had been any investigations into allegations of police brutality against minors. Did the State party intend to establish a nationwide system of disciplinary proceedings for cases of ill-treatment by public officials, and would a fully independent body be set up to deal with complaints against the police?

32. Regarding the increasing number of asylum seekers arriving in the State party, she asked whether identification procedures had been amended, whether any provisions were being made to increase legal aid for foreign nationals, and whether any alternatives to detention were being considered. The lack of staff to deal with all aspects of large migrant influxes was a cause for concern. Lastly, she requested information on the status of investigations into the allegations of police abuse of members of vigilante groups.

33. **Mr. Zhang** (Country Rapporteur) welcomed the closure of children's psychiatric institutions and the news that the use of force to extract confessions was considered a criminal offence. He requested further information on hate crimes, and asked what was being done to ensure that victims of hate crimes or violence received appropriate compensation.

34. **Mr. Hani** requested clarification on how the capacity and occupancy of Sofia prison were calculated. He also requested further information on the conditions in reception centres for migrants, in particular with regard to sanitation and basic hygiene, and asked how victims of torture were identified among large migrant populations. With regard to the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric care, he wished to know whether any measures were being taken to regulate the prescription of medication for mental health conditions and prevent over-prescription. Lastly, further information on forced deportations would be appreciated.

35. **Ms. Gaer** asked whether members of the vigilante groups mentioned by Ms. Racu had been prosecuted or convicted and whether any public figures had endorsed the actions of such groups.

36. **Ms. Belmir** said she would like to know whether detainees sentenced to life imprisonment truly needed to be kept in handcuffs when outside their cells. The humiliation of the measure gratuitously inflicted additional suffering.

37. **The Chair** asked how many medical doctors had reported cases of ill-treatment to the competent prosecutor and what the outcome of such reporting had been.

*The meeting was suspended at 5.05 p.m. and resumed at 5.25 p.m.*

38. **Mr. Sterk** (Bulgaria) said that the Government hoped to expedite the incorporation of the definition of torture into domestic legislation, but given that the National Assembly

was an independent legislative body, the speed of the process was beyond the control of the Government.

39. In 2016, the Ombudsman, acting as the representative of the national preventive mechanism, had visited 12 places of detention and planned to have visited a total of 33 places of detention by the end of 2017. The national preventive mechanism currently had six persons on staff and the Government aimed to increase the body's budget.

40. **Ms. Tsenova** (Bulgaria) said that the National Legal Aid Bureau provided victims of crime with legal aid and access to justice. The amended Legal Assistance Act, which had entered into force in early 2017, had broadened the categories of persons eligible for such assistance and introduced two new forms of legal aid. Regional counselling centres provided immediate legal advice to citizens.

41. **Ms. Radkovska** (Bulgaria) said that under new legislation, all prisons were required to keep a register of detainees' status with regard to traumatic injuries; the information documented included medical diagnoses and treatment. It was mandatory under the law to notify the competent prosecutor of all cases of violent acts committed against inmates; furthermore, every three months, a report on such cases was submitted to the Deputy Minister of Justice. The confidentiality of inmates' medical records was guaranteed by law.

42. **Mr. Berner** (Bulgaria) said that complaints of violence perpetrated against migrants by public officials were forwarded to the General Directorate of Border Police, the Internal Security Directorate and the corresponding prosecutor's office. According to data from the General Directorate of Border Police, three such complaints had been submitted in 2015; subsequent investigations had revealed no misconduct on the part of police officers. That same year, at a time of increased migrant flows across the border with Turkey, an Afghan national had been killed by a ricocheting bullet. The incident had been promptly reported to the regional prosecutor and the subsequent investigation had found that no offence had been committed. In 2016, five complaints of violence against migrants had been submitted; in two cases, the police officers involved had been found guilty and disciplinary measures had been imposed, while the remaining three complaints had been found to be groundless. Measures recently introduced had improved border police discipline considerably, and no complaints had been submitted since early 2017.

43. Between 2015 and 2017, the Internal Security Directorate had investigated eight alleged cases of violence and theft committed against migrants, finding that in two of the cases, offences had taken place. The relevant details had been forwarded to the regional prosecutor.

44. **Ms. Spassova** (Bulgaria) said that the Government was committed to ensuring the human rights of all migrants in Bulgarian territory. Legislation stipulated deadlines for the registration and processing of asylum requests to facilitate decisions on the granting of refugee status. Generally, the relevant laws closely reflected European Union directives on the subject.

45. Information on access to justice for migrants was provided in leaflets printed in multiple languages and made readily available at border crossings. Representatives of the Office of the Ombudsman met with individuals temporarily housed in dedicated facilities for migrants, and all persons at such facilities were given access to legal representation. It was important to note that the Migration Directorate was working with the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee to provide legal assistance on a weekly basis to those requiring it. The Government was still looking into alternatives to detention for migrants arriving in Bulgaria.

46. **Mr. Lashev** (Bulgaria) said that the Government pursued a consistent policy to prevent all forms of discrimination and all alleged incidents of racism or intolerance were closely monitored. The competent prosecutor investigated all racially motivated incidents. All alleged violations of the law by police officers were investigated, and where such violations were proven, those responsible were brought to justice. In 2013, approximately 650 hate crimes had been registered by the police; some 300 of the perpetrators had been prosecuted and about 230 of those had been sentenced. In 2015, roughly 700 hate crimes had been registered; just over 750 of the perpetrators had been prosecuted and about 140 individuals had been sentenced.



47. The issue of hate crimes was a training priority for prosecutors, investigators and police officers and such training was conducted regularly. In accordance with a memorandum of understanding between the National Institute of Justice and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, specialized training for prosecutors had been carried out in 2015 and 2016.

48. **Mr. Prodanov** (Bulgaria) said that in order to accurately answer Mr. Hani's question regarding prison sanitary conditions, he would need to know which part of the prison facilities in Sofia was concerned.

49. The provision of effective legal assistance for prisoners was a very important issue. However, because the Bulgarian bar was an independent, self-governing body, it was not within the power of the State to exercise control over the quality of legal counsel delivered by lawyers in the country. Nevertheless, the internal regulations of the bar did provide for the relevant oversight.

50. **Mr. Sterk** (Bulgaria) said that the delegation knew of no public figures who had endorsed the actions of vigilante groups. On the contrary, such activities had been clearly and forcefully condemned.

51. The delegation would carefully examine all the Committee's questions and recommendations. Bulgaria remained committed to continuing the process of inter-institutional coordination and dialogue with all the relevant stakeholders.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*