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Summary record of the 4226th meeting*

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Chair: Mr. Soh

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

Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 40 of the Covenant

Third periodic report of Kazakhstan (CCPR/C/KAZ/3; CCPR/C/KAZ/QPR/3)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Kazakhstan joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Kazakhstan**, introducing her country's third periodic report (CCPR/C/KAZ/3), said that a number of significant institutional changes aimed at consolidating democracy had occurred in Kazakhstan during the reporting period.
3. The country had moved from a super-presidential form of government to a presidential republic with a strengthened parliament. The President could now serve only a single seven-year term and could not seek re-election. Rural mayors were directly elected, and regional authorities had been granted greater autonomy. The consent of the Majilis, the lower house of Parliament, was required for the appointment of the Prime Minister and other members of the Government, and the Majilis was empowered to hear reports from the Government, including on human rights issues.
4. The registration process for political parties had been simplified, the electoral process improved and the registration threshold reduced, from 20,000 to 5,000 members. For the first time, six political parties, including opposition parties, were represented in the Majilis. Nearly half of all Members of Parliament were newly elected, and a 30 per cent quota had been introduced for women, young people and persons with disabilities on party electoral lists.
5. The Constitutional Court had been re-established as a key mechanism for protecting rights and freedoms, with direct, free access for all citizens, including socially vulnerable groups such as veterans, persons with disabilities, pensioners and orphans. Interpretation services, including in sign language, were available. To date, the Court had issued over 500 rulings and 71 final decisions. In 20 per cent of reviewed cases, legal provisions had been found to be unconstitutional.
6. New legislation had expanded the powers of the Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman), who could now directly address the authorities with proposals to improve human rights mechanisms and initiate legislative measures. The Ombudsman was empowered to file lawsuits to defend the rights of individuals, access all prisons freely, interview any person and intervene in cases of rights violations. Regional ombudsmen for the rights of children and for socially vulnerable groups had been appointed across the country.
7. The Act on the Procedure for Organizing and Holding Peaceful Assemblies, Rallies, Marches, Pickets and Demonstrations of 2020 marked a shift from a permission-based system to a notification-based one. Since its adoption, more than 1,500 peaceful assemblies had been held without any violations. Defamation had been decriminalized and now carried only administrative liability. The new Public Oversight Act granted citizens and civil society organizations the right to oversee government and quasi-public entities. A petition system had been introduced; the Government was obliged to respond to petitions that received more than 50,000 signatures.
8. A new law on mass media had been adopted, introducing a special status for journalists and significantly expanding their rights to access and disseminate information. In 2023, the Social Code had been adopted, enshrining equality and the inadmissibility of discrimination in all areas of life. State social benefits had been increased by 15 per cent. In 2024, a law aimed at protecting victims of domestic violence had been adopted, resulting in a significant drop in the number of crimes committed against women. Penalties for crimes involving the violation of the sexual integrity of children had been increased, and the possibility of reconciliation between the parties in such cases had been eliminated.
9. Public monitoring commissions and the national preventive mechanism had unrestricted access to all closed facilities in the country without prior notice. Over the previous decade, the number of institutions under the mechanism's mandate had been increased from 600 to 4,000. In 2023, Kazakhstan had received a visit from the Subcommittee

on Prevention of Torture. To ensure transparency and accountability, the Subcommittee's final report on the visit addressed to the State Party ([CAT/OP/KAZ/ROSP/1](#)) had been made public.

10. Prosecution authorities had been granted exclusive jurisdiction over cases of torture, and criminal liability had been established for cruel and inhuman treatment. Thanks to preventive measures, the number of registered torture cases had declined each year. All complaints of the use of coercion or pressure must be registered. A compensation fund had been set up for victims of torture in 2020 and, over the previous five years, more than 3,000 compensation payments had been made. In 2024, a law on combating trafficking in persons had been adopted, guaranteeing protection and assistance and access to education, healthcare and employment to victims regardless of their legal status.

11. The Government was also taking measures to protect citizens abroad. From 2019 to 2021, the country had carried out the special operations, "Zhusan" and "Rusafa", through which it had repatriated 754 individuals from Syria. All repatriated children had received passports and women had been supported in returning to a normal life.

12. Three new human rights plans reflected systemic efforts to enhance human rights protections. The plans provided for a total of 94 actions, more than 75 per cent of which had already been implemented. They included the ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the Covenant, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, without reservations. Kazakhstan was currently working with the countries of Central Asia, Mongolia and the International Commission against the Death Penalty to make the region the first death penalty-free zone.

13. In 2022, a working group including representatives of the main State authorities had been established to ensure the effective implementation of decisions and requests from United Nations bodies. The Government had responded positively to decisions on individual communications by various human rights treaty bodies, including through the payment of compensation. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had visited Kazakhstan in 2023, and his recommendations had been incorporated into a comprehensive action plan on human rights and the rule of law.

14. Civil society was a key partner in the protection and promotion of human rights. One notable example of the Government's engagement with civil society was the Dialogue Platform on the Human Dimension, an advisory working group within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since 2013, more than 50 meetings had been held, and their outcomes, which were reflected in the country's human rights action plans, had led to recently adopted laws to combat trafficking in persons, criminalize domestic violence and prevent torture.

15. **Ms. Donders** said that the Committee was concerned about the limited mandate of the working group created to follow up on the Views of human rights treaty bodies, as well as reports that no action was taken on most Views. She wondered whether the State Party had considered strengthening the working group's mandate beyond a general legal analysis of the compliance of Views with national law and would be interested to learn about any other measures taken to give full effect to the Committee's recommendations.

16. Following the adoption of the International Treaties Act in 2021, she wondered whether the Covenant could now be directly applied in the national legal order and the national courts. She would appreciate information on any training on the Covenant and the rights enshrined therein, including clarification of the scope and target audience of such training. It would also be interesting to learn about the tangible impact of the State Party's various human rights action plans.

17. She wondered whether the State Party was planning to request re-accreditation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, in the hope that the Office of the Ombudsman would be upgraded to A status; if not, it would be useful to learn what the main obstacles were to full compliance with the Paris Principles. She would like to know whether the procedure for the Ombudsman's appointment was transparent, merit-based and independent; whether his or her mandate covered the protection of all human rights, including the rights of disadvantaged groups; how the Ombudsman was involved in monitoring the implementation of treaties in collaboration with civil society; and whether and how the Ombudsman could be held accountable for any action or inaction.

18. Lastly, in the light of reports that the national preventive mechanism was not fully effective because of its dependence on the Ombudsman and that confidentiality rules prevented it from publicly disclosing its findings, she would welcome information on any measures the State Party planned to take to improve the mechanism's functioning, strengthen its independence and increase its transparency and public accountability.

19. **Mr. Korkelia** said that, in the light of reports that the Anti-Corruption Agency lacked independence, he would be grateful if the delegation could explain the mechanisms in place to ensure that the Agency and the process for appointing its Chair were independent. He also wished to know how the legislative framework provided a safe and free environment for civil society and journalists to access corruption-related information and investigate corruption.

20. He wondered what concrete legislative measures were planned to clearly define and narrow the scope of interpretation of terms such as "extremism", "inciting social or class hatred" and "religious hatred or enmity", as contained in the Criminal Code, and would welcome information on any further planned reform of counter-terrorism law. He would also welcome clarification of the standards used by the courts in interpreting such terms and statistical data on persons tried and/or convicted of acts of terrorism or extremism, with specification of the acts investigated, the charges brought and the sentences handed down during the reporting period.

21. The Committee welcomed sentence commutations for non-lethal terrorist offences but was concerned about the required cooperation, especially informing on others, given reports of overly broad counter-terrorism laws affecting journalists and civil society, and would welcome clarification on what cooperation entailed. According to available information, anyone convicted in Kazakhstan on extremist or terrorist charges was automatically placed on a list of people and organizations associated with financing terrorism and extremists and subject to wide-ranging financial restrictions. He would appreciate more detailed information on that list.

22. In the light of reports of limited access to safe abortion and contraception, he would welcome information on concrete steps taken to expand access to affordable, high-quality contraception for all; any plans to broaden eligibility for free contraceptives beyond high-risk groups; targeted interventions to reduce early pregnancies and unsafe abortions; and family planning information and abortion services that were accessible, culturally appropriate and based on individual choice and informed consent. In addition, he would appreciate information on the legal and policy measures in place to prevent coercive reproductive practices; efforts to develop inclusive, disability-sensitive and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health education; and any reforms planned to ensure adequate training for healthcare providers on the importance of using contraceptives and sexual and reproductive health rights.

23. **Mr. Yigezu** said that he wished to know what steps the State Party planned to take to thoroughly investigate and ensure accountability for the killings that had taken place during the December 2011 demonstrations in Zhanaozen and to ensure an independent review of related allegations of torture, ill-treatment, threats and intimidation by law enforcement officers and to hold the perpetrators to account and provide adequate remedies to victims and their families. It would also be useful to receive information on the number of complaints submitted to the authorities alleging torture or ill-treatment in detention in relation to the investigations, including claims of forced confessions and fair-trial violations, and on the number of investigations carried out, prosecutions and convictions handed down, sanctions imposed and remedies provided to victims or their families.

24. He would like to know what measures would be taken to further reduce suicide and death rates in prisons; to ensure the prompt, impartial and independent investigation of deaths in custody; to bring the perpetrators of such deaths to justice; and to provide victims' families with legal remedies.

25. **Mr. Helfer** said that the Committee was concerned about the reported persistence of discrimination on grounds such as ethnicity, age and sexual orientation and the lack of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law. He wondered whether the standing working group on anti-discrimination legislation that had been established in 2024 had drawn up proposed amendments to the country's anti-discrimination legislation and, if so, what the proposals

comprised and how soon they would be considered by the parliament. He also wished to know what steps were being taken to improve the enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation.

26. He would like to know whether the State Party would consider stepping up its efforts to support persons with disabilities by removing derogatory language from its legislation and by recognizing the denial of reasonable accommodation as a form of discrimination. It would be helpful if the delegation could explain why so few cases of discrimination had been submitted to the Ombudsman or brought before the courts under article 145 of the Criminal Code and provide an update on the status of the cases mentioned in paragraphs 85 and 86 of the State Party's report.

27. He would appreciate information on the activities of the committee on inter-ethnic relations and non-discrimination that had been established in the wake of large-scale ethnic violence against the Dungan community in February 2020, as well as information on the status of the investigations and prosecutions initiated in relation to those events and the remedies provided to victims and their families.

28. Given certain protection gaps in the Criminal Code, he wondered what remedies were available to victims of violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. He wished to know what measures were being taken to prevent the targeting of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons by public authorities and to address the reported failure of the police to respond appropriately to cases of harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups by private actors.

29. He would like the delegation to comment on reports that some lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organizations had had their applications for legal registration and their requests to hold peaceful assemblies denied; and to explain what steps would be taken to enable those organizations to exercise their rights under the Covenant. It would be useful to know what actions were being taken or considered by the Ministry of Culture and Information in response to the petition filed by the Kazakhstan Union of Parents calling for a ban on "open and hidden lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender propaganda".

30. Lastly, he wished to know why the minimum age for gender reassignment had been raised from 18 to 21 years in 2020; why people seeking gender reassignment were required to undergo surgery; and how the financial barriers to gender reassignment would be addressed.

31. **Ms. Bassim** said that she would appreciate information on the measures being taken to ensure substantive gender equality in law and in practice and to address the discrimination faced by women in various areas of life, including education, employment and property ownership. She would like to know what efforts were being made to achieve the equitable representation of women in the private and public sectors and in political life, especially in decision-making positions in elected and appointed bodies such as the Senate. She would welcome information on the measures being taken to tackle the significant gender pay gap.

32. The Committee was concerned about the State Party's decision to replace its Gender Equality Strategy for 2006–2016 with a family and gender policy framework, which appeared to reinforce traditional stereotypes of women's role in the family. It was also concerned about the narrow scope of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act, the decriminalization of intentionally inflicted minor injuries and the lack of a consent-based definition of rape in national law. In the light of those concerns, it would be helpful if the delegation could describe any legislative or other measures taken to prevent and combat violence against women and girls, including domestic and sexual violence; and the outcome of the efforts made to tackle the surge in domestic violence during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. She would also welcome information on any plans to bring national legislation into line with international standards by establishing as specific criminal offences all acts of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, stalking and early and forced marriage; by repealing provisions that allowed perpetrators to go unpunished; and by ensuring a victim-centred approach to investigations and prosecutions.

33. She would be interested to know what steps had been taken to encourage women victims of violence to file complaints, including by reducing social stigma and increasing victims' access to justice; to ensure adequate funding for victim support services; and to ensure the availability of shelters for victims of domestic violence in all areas of the country. It would be useful if the delegation could provide disaggregated data on complaints, investigations, prosecutions and convictions in cases of violence against women, including information on the sentences handed down and the measures taken for the protection, compensation and rehabilitation of victims. Lastly, she wondered whether the Government had conducted campaigns to raise awareness of violence against women and girls, taking into account the role of the media and of religious and opinion leaders; and whether there were plans to provide training to all officials dealing with cases of violence of that kind, including police officers, members of the judiciary and health workers.

The meeting was suspended at 4 p.m. and resumed at 4.20 p.m.

34. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that the legal issues raised in the Committee's Views were analysed by the Office of the Procurator General. Meetings held by the Office on specific Views could sometimes be attended by the author of the initial complaint. The main areas in which measures had been taken in response to the Committee's Views were peaceful assembly, torture prevention and the right to a fair trial. Examples of measures taken included the adoption of amendments to the Criminal Code and to the Act on the Procedure for Organizing and Holding Peaceful Assemblies, Rallies, Marches, Pickets and Demonstrations; the payment of compensation to victims; and the drafting of provisions on sexual harassment in the workplace. The Committee's Views were translated into Kazakh and Russian and were published on the official websites of the relevant government bodies.

35. The Covenant was directly applicable and recognized as part of national legislation. Under the Constitution, all international agreements that had been ratified by the State took precedence over domestic legislation.

36. Around 75 per cent of the measures set out in the human rights action plan had already been implemented. Frameworks on safety at work and on inclusive policies for the period up to 2030 had been adopted. Changes to the conduct of forensic examinations and psychological assessments in cases of torture had been introduced. A plan to promote equal rights and opportunities for men and women for the period up to 2027 had been adopted. Gender equality advisers had been appointed in all oblasts.

37. The status of the Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman) was governed by the Constitution and the Constitutional Act on the Human Rights Commissioner and was in line with the Paris Principles. The Ombudsman was independent and could not be prosecuted.

38. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that the work of the national preventive mechanism was coordinated by the Office of the Ombudsman in cooperation with the Coordination Council for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations. The members of the Coordination Council were independent and elected for a term of four years. All members had the right to vote and to express a dissenting opinion, and decisions were made by a majority vote. The national preventive mechanism was composed of 136 members, of whom around 20 per cent were human rights defenders and around 40 per cent were lawyers. Its members included representatives of the Coordination Council who had been elected to the mechanism for a two-year term. The mechanism operated independently, and any attempt to obstruct its activities was punishable by a fine. The mechanism's work was guided by an approved methodology that covered all types of places of deprivation of liberty. The mechanism conducted three types of visit: planned, special and thematic. Training was provided to members of the mechanism in coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other bodies. The mechanism had an annual budget of around US\$ 170,000, which had been administered by the National Human Rights Centre since 2023.

39. Representatives of the Ombudsman had been appointed in a number of oblasts. In 2023, representatives of the Ombudsman had conducted around 650 visits and had issued around 600 recommendations, of which 78 per cent had been implemented. An assessment of the institutional capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman had been conducted in 2023 and

steps were being taken to implement the resulting recommendations, with the aim of achieving category A status.

40. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that the national preventive mechanism had unrestricted access to all places of deprivation of liberty and was not required to give advance notice of its visits.

41. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that, in 2016, around 30 judges had received training on the direct applicability of international treaties, including the Covenant. In recent years, thousands of legal decisions referring directly to the Covenant had been handed down. For example, in East Kazakhstan Oblast, a man had successfully challenged a decision to revoke his right to reside in Kazakhstan by invoking the Covenant.

42. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that the Anti-Corruption Agency was an independent State body that reported directly to the President. The head of the Agency was appointed and could be dismissed by the President. The Agency's main task was to ensure that penalties for corruption were enforced, regardless of the offender's rank. As result of the Agency's work, penalties had been imposed on 4 ministers, 11 deputy ministers, 20 judges and 41 prosecutors, among other officials, and assets worth millions of dollars had been seized. Any cash that was seized was transferred directly into the State budget and used, for example, to fund the building of schools and other infrastructure. The Agency published information about its activities on social media and statistics relating to corruption were available on the website of the Office of the Procurator General. The Agency's work was supported by a body of volunteers.

43. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that legal and institutional mechanisms were in place to ensure the safety of journalists, including those investigating cases of corruption, provided that they carried out their work in accordance with the law. Journalists were entitled to receive responses to their questions within a specific time period and must be granted access to all major events and natural disaster sites. The Ministry of Culture and Information closely monitored any events involving journalists and provided them with assistance where necessary.

44. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that his country's laws on combating terrorism and extremism drew on the Constitution and on relevant international legal instruments, including resolutions of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Convictions on charges related to terrorism and extremism had been reviewed, and there was nothing to indicate that they had been unjustified. What was more, article 174 of the Criminal Code had been amended in 2020 with a view to preventing overly broad interpretations of the concept of incitement to hatred. In 2024, his country had received a delegation from the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Steps had been taken in follow-up to the recommendations made by the Ad Hoc Committee.

45. When a person convicted on charges related to terrorism or extremism completed his or her sentence or had repented, the person's name was removed from the list of people and organizations associated with financing terrorism and extremism, which was drawn up in accordance with the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. Moreover, the person's rights were restored.

46. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that every woman had the right to decide for herself whether she wished to give birth. Women also had the right not to be subjected to sterilization or forced to have an abortion. Every woman had access to all sexual and reproductive health services, contraceptive services in particular. A minor who wished to have an abortion had to have the written consent of her parents. Family planning centres operated throughout the country, including in rural areas. Specialized doctors provided family planning advice and might recommend a particular method of contraception.

47. In rural areas, which were home to around 38 per cent of the country's population, there was a fairly dense network of healthcare providers. Nearly 350 health centres had been opened since 2021. The country also had 94 centres for young people at which it was possible to consult physicians of a range of specialties, including gynaecology, urology, dermatology and venereology, and social workers. More than 780,000 young people had sought assistance

at the centres in 2024. Psychological support, sought by 36 per cent of the centre's users, was much in demand.

48. A large number of activities, including round tables and debates, had been organized to prevent unwanted pregnancy. The aim was in part to encourage young people to adopt healthy behaviours. The number of women of childbearing age who had had abortions had fallen from 12 per 1,000 previously to 10.2 per 1,000 in 2024. Expanded access to health services had helped bring maternal and infant mortality down to historic lows.

49. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that the "Schools for an Independent Life" programme, in which around 300 young people with disabilities participated every year, had been operating in Almaty for eight years. Approximately \$200,000 a year was set aside for the programme, which the authorities were considering expanding to other parts of the country.

50. Recently, events bringing together some half a million people, in particular young people, had been organized as part of what had been declared reproductive health week. Relevant information had been produced in formats accessible to persons with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities.

51. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that the Office of the Procurator General had proposed that the United Nations should take part in the investigation into the events of December 2011 in Zhanaozen. What was more, in 2012, during her visit to Kazakhstan, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had been given a full and objective account of those events, and for the first time in the country's history, a public commission, on which political parties, civil society, the media, oil workers and others had been represented, had been set up to lead an investigation. The members of the commission had spoken with the persons arrested in connection with the events and found that they had not been subjected to torture or ill-treatment. A delegation from Penal Reform International, a non-governmental organization, had visited Kazakhstan and come to a similar conclusion. All 13 of the people who had ultimately been given prison sentences for their role in the unrest had since been released.

52. Although some of the people who had been charged had claimed that they had been subjected to torture by law enforcement officials, no criminal proceedings had been instituted, as no evidence of a crime had been found. The decisions not to proceed had been upheld on appeal. The second in command of the Internal Affairs Department of Mangistau Oblast and four other law enforcement officials had been given prison sentences for their role in the shooting deaths of 12 protesters and injuries to scores more. None of the victims of the shootings or their relatives had availed themselves of the opportunity to seek reparations.

53. **A representative of Kazakhstan**, noting that discrimination on the grounds of sex, ethnicity, race and other grounds was prohibited, said that in follow-up to the successful activities of the Committee on Inter-Ethnic Relations established in 2020, including in its role as the body that coordinated the work of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, an institute had been set up to provide a home for applied research into matters pertaining to ethnicity and politics. Those and other efforts had contributed to the stability that characterized inter-ethnic relations in Kazakhstan.

54. An interdepartmental working group had been set up to formulate recommendations on combating discrimination in law and in practice. The country's lawmakers were expected to begin discussing anti-discrimination legislation in the coming months.

55. The petition calling for a law that would ban open and hidden lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender propaganda had been submitted to the Government in 2024. Instead of acceding to the petitioners' demand, however, the authorities had decided that no action would be taken until there had been a thorough study of the impact, on children in particular, of such propaganda. An earlier publication on a similar topic, a simple review, was unrelated to the study prompted by the petition. At all events, there were no prohibitions concerning sexual orientation or gender identity in the country's laws.

56. Feminita was not the only civil society organization working to protect the rights of women in Kazakhstan. Other organizations, too, were active in that field, and their members

had not infrequently taken part in demonstrations. By law, persons 21 and older could, as long they had legal capacity, undergo a sex change.

57. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that 86 people had been convicted on charges, some very serious, relating to their involvement in the events of February 2020 in Korday District. Considerable damage had been done, but charitable and other funds had made it possible to repair it.

58. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that particular attention was paid to supporting persons with disabilities. By law, such persons had the right to decent housing; some were given priority access to housing administered by the State housing fund. Housing was also provided to the families of children with disabilities.

59. Measures continued to be taken, in accordance with a number of national and international standards, to ensure the accessibility of the built environment. An interactive accessibility map of the country had been created in 2020 and published on a government web portal. More than 24,000 buildings had been made accessible to persons with disabilities in recent years, and work to make infrastructure even more accessible was ongoing.

60. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that a law to protect women and children from violence, including domestic violence, had been adopted in April 2024. As a result, persons found liable for violence against children could incur both administrative and criminal penalties, and the police were required to investigate cases of domestic violence even if the victim did not wish to file a report. Repeat offenders no longer had access to conciliation procedures. Reports of stalking were investigated.

61. Forcing a person into marriage had been made a criminal offence earlier in the year. The victim's subsequent consent to the marriage would not exempt the perpetrator from liability for the offence.

62. The Ministry of Internal Affairs had a unit, staffed primarily by women, that worked to combat domestic violence. The unit's staff members, who received ongoing training at relevant public institutions, had the resources they needed to do their jobs. There were currently 116 support centres for victims of domestic violence. That number was expected to increase considerably in the coming two years.

63. The courts took measures, including the issuance of restraining or no-contact orders, to help ensure that victims of domestic violence could file complaints without fear of reprisal. Newly created mobile units staffed by psychologists and social workers, which were deployed in response to reports of domestic violence, organized outreach campaigns. All victims of violence had the right to support and protection.

64. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that women, according to figures from the Central Electoral Commission, accounted for 22.7 per cent of the membership of the country's lawmaking bodies. Every effort was being made to ensure that the figure reached 30 per cent. Three government ministries were headed by women. To varying degrees, women had leadership roles in a number of other public institutions, including the courts. Nearly 56 per cent of all government workers were women. Although the policy document adopted in follow-up to the Gender Equality Strategy for 2006–2016 – the Family and Gender Policy Framework for the period up to 2030 – had been renamed to include the word “family”, its ideological foundations had remained unchanged.

65. The authorities were working with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to provide grants to support gender equality initiatives. The Ministry of Culture and Information was, for its part, encouraging other government institutions to apply for the gender equality seal awarded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). UNDP was also providing advice on gender-sensitive budgeting.

66. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that 32 per cent of the staff members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including 15 per cent of its senior staff, were women. Material and social security for members of the diplomatic service was provided in accordance with the Diplomatic Service Act. Her country had adopted an action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in 2021. Since 2018, seven female Kazakh service

members had served as military observers, as staff officers or in other capacities on peacekeeping missions.

67. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that the principle according to which women and men were to receive equal pay for equal work was enshrined in the Constitution. A similar guarantee was established in labour law, under which discrimination on a number of bases, including sex, was prohibited. In addition, flexible working arrangements made it possible for people to reconcile their working and personal lives.

68. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that, on the President's initiative, stalking had been made a criminal offence and that steps were being taken, in accordance with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, to which his country had been invited to accede in 2020, to make harassment a criminal offence, too.

69. **Ms. Donders** said that, although it had been helpful to hear about the State Party's general procedure for taking action in follow-up to the Committee's Views, it would be useful to hear what action had been taken in specific cases. She wondered whether the State Party might consider involving the press and social media in efforts to draw attention to the recommendations that were transmitted to it by the human rights treaty bodies. She also wondered how, in view of the role played by the President in the appointment of the Ombudsman, the State Party intended to bring the Office of the Ombudsman fully into line with the Paris Principles, whether representatives of the Office could make unannounced visits to places of detention and whether the authorities were aware of the confidentiality rules that prevented the Office from making its findings public.

70. **Mr. Yigezu** said that, although he welcomed the information that had been provided on the State Party's response to the shooting deaths of protesters in Zhanaozen in 2011, he wondered whether there had been investigations into each of the deaths and whether the State Party had offered a public apology for the actions of its officials.

71. **Mr. Helfer**, noting that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons should be explicitly allowed to demand their rights, said that he would welcome a detailed description of the activities of the working group on anti-discrimination legislation. He would also welcome additional information about the study that the Government had commissioned in the wake of the submission of the petition calling for the adoption of a law banning open and hidden lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender propaganda.

72. **Ms. Bassim** said that she wished to know whether steps were being taken to establish specific criminal offences for violence and harassment in the world of work, as that conduct was understood in the International Labour Organization Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), and in non-work contexts and, if so, whether those steps involved consultations or dialogue with all relevant stakeholders. She wished to know, too, whether laws to combat violence against women and girls encountered resistance from conservative sectors of society and whether the authorities organized public awareness campaigns designed to help combat such violence.

73. **Mr. Korkelia** said that he wondered exactly what had been done to ensure that the term "extremism" contained in article 174 of the Criminal Code was defined more narrowly. He wondered, too, what objective standards the courts used to determine whether a given act could be considered extremist.

74. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that the national preventive mechanism had made an average of 500 visits a year to places of detention during the period under review. Action had been taken in follow-up to around 44 per cent of the thousands of recommendations it had made.

75. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that the Office of the Ombudsman, which was represented at locations throughout the country, organized training and informational events for students, human rights defenders and the general public.

76. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that there had indeed been investigations into the allegations of torture made by a number of persons who had been tried for their role in the events in Zhanaozen. A police chief had been given a prison sentence of 5 years for

keeping Bazarbai Kenzhebaev, who had been arrested in the vicinity of the protests, in police detention, where he had been badly beaten, over the objections of a doctor, who had recommended that Kenzhebaev, who had later died of his injuries, should be admitted to a hospital. Although there had been an investigation into Kenzhebaev's death, it had since come to a close, and no one else had been charged in connection with the case.

77. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that the results of the study that had been prompted by the petition calling for a ban on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender propaganda were expected shortly. A diversity of views had been sought in connection with the petition.

78. In a case hingeing on the interpretation of article 14 of the Act on the Procedure for Organizing and Holding Peaceful Assemblies, Rallies, Marches, Pickets and Demonstrations, the Constitutional Court had ruled that the authorities were required to substantiate any decision to require a change to the planned time or place of an assembly. Everyone, it could thus be said, had the right to freedom of assembly.

79. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that the courts, always acting on the strength of the evidence, had convicted hundreds of people on charges brought under article 174 of the Criminal Code, which had been amended to refer to deliberate attempts to incite hatred, including ethnic or racial hatred. If the Committee had specific recommendations for possible improvements to the article, he would welcome them. Twenty-three people had been convicted on charges of financing terrorism and extremism since 2016. Over the previous two years, proceedings brought against 300 people suspected of involvement in extremism or terrorism had been dropped for lack of evidence.

80. **A representative of Kazakhstan** said that various forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, were already punishable by law. Consideration was nonetheless being given to the adoption of legislative amendments that would enhance the effectiveness of efforts to combat harassment.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.