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Summary record of the 4150th meeting*

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Chair: Ms. Abdo Rocholl

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* No summary records were issued for the 4148th and 4149th meetings.

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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

Sixth periodic report of Iceland (CCPR/C/ISL/6; CCPR/C/ISL/QPR/6)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Iceland joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Iceland**, introducing her country's sixth periodic report (CCPR/C/ISL/6), said that human rights were increasingly under threat, amid a backlash against human rights and gender equality around the world. Iceland was committed to reverse that trend through respectful dialogue, transparency and constructive engagement. To advance human rights at the national level, the Icelandic parliament had passed a law establishing a national human rights institution, which would become operational on 1 January 2025.
3. Promoting equality and non-discrimination continued to be a core priority for Iceland; the country had ranked first on the Global Gender Gap Index for 15 consecutive years. In 2020, the parliament had enacted a law on gender equality containing a provision on multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Two anti-discrimination laws were in place to ensure equal treatment both inside and outside the labour market, and an equal pay certification scheme had been introduced. To address persisting challenges associated with gender segregation and the undervaluation of women-dominated sectors, the Government had begun to focus on ensuring pay equity by comparing different jobs of equal value based on factors such as education, skills, responsibility and effort. All residents holding a humanitarian resident permit were entitled to work indefinitely, and the rights of foreign students to work during and after completing their studies had been expanded as part of efforts to improve the right to work of citizens from countries outside the European Economic Area.
4. In 2022, the parliament had adopted the first comprehensive action plan on equality and rights for members of the LGBTIQ+ community. Policy advancements in that area had propelled Iceland from eighteenth to second place on the equality ranking by the International Lesbian and Gay Association of European countries over a six-year period. Extensive campaigns had been conducted to raise awareness of hate speech and hate crimes, and amendments had been made to the General Penal Code to provide comprehensive protection against such offences. As Iceland had the fastest growing immigrant population among States members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Government had published a draft policy on building an inclusive society based on the principles of equality, justice and respect for human rights for all.
5. Regrettably, sexual and gender-based violence remained one of the country's most pressing human rights challenges. To address the issue, the definition of rape in the General Penal Code had been amended in 2018 to strengthen legal protection for victims and survivors, and new provisions on stalking and digital sexual violence had entered into force in 2021. Efforts had been made to improve victims' experience of the justice system by making reporting easier. In May 2023, the law had been amended to clarify the rules governing permission for healthcare workers to inform the police when treating survivors of domestic violence, and the Government was finalizing a national action plan on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). To combat all forms of trafficking in persons, amendments had been made to the General Penal Code to further enhance judicial protection for victims and survivors of trafficking. In early 2024, an interministerial steering committee had been set up to develop a new action plan to combat trafficking in persons, to replace the framework for addressing trafficking in persons and other forms of exploitation, established by the Government in 2019.
6. Within the criminal justice system, more convicts had been given the right to reduce their sentence by carrying out unpaid community service, and the Ministry of Justice was working on measures to reduce the overall length of proceedings. The Government was developing a comprehensive strategy for improving prison conditions, with extensive consultation of stakeholders. An analysis of the current situation in the prison system and related challenges was under way, the results of which would be published in a green paper.

The permanent team of mental health workers for prisoners had been expanded to improve the provision of services, and the process of admitting prisoners to psychiatric wards had been streamlined.

7. **Ms. Kran** said that she wished to know what steps the State party was taking to raise awareness of the Covenant, the Optional Protocols and the Committee's concluding observations among the judiciary, public officials, civil society and the general public; what information was available to the public about the communications procedure under the first Optional Protocol to the Covenant and whether that information was accessible to non-Icelandic speakers; and what measures the State party had taken to give effect to the Committee's Views concerning communication No. CCPR/C/130/D/2818/2016 (*X v. Iceland*), which had been adopted in 2020. She wondered what progress Iceland had made in developing a national plan on human rights issues and what measures were being taken to ensure ongoing engagement with civil society in the preparation and implementation of the initiatives outlined in a green paper on the human rights situation that had been published by the Office of the Prime Minister in January 2023.

8. She would be interested to learn how Iceland ensured that draft laws were aligned with the Committee's interpretation of the State's obligations under the Covenant, general comments and Views, what measures were in place to ensure that those involved in the drafting process were kept abreast of developments related to the application of the Covenant, and what steps Iceland planned to take to close the gaps between its international obligations and national legislation. She would appreciate information about cases considered since 2012 in which parties had invoked the provisions of the Covenant, and the courts' responses in those cases.

9. She wished to hear about the State party's plans to remove its reservation to article 20 (1) of the Covenant, in the light of the Committee's general comment No. 11 (1983), which clarified the compatibility of the prohibition of propaganda for war with freedom of expression. She wondered what measures were in place to promote public awareness and understanding of the limitations on freedom of expression under article 20 (1) and what steps would be taken to incorporate fully articles 10 and 14 into domestic laws and practice, considering the withdrawal of the State party's reservations to those articles.

10. **Mr. Teraya** said that he welcomed the recent enactment of legislation by the parliament establishing a national human rights institution, the absence of which had been a long-standing concern for the Committee. He would appreciate a detailed timeline for the institution's establishment, and he wished to know whether the new institution conformed to the Paris Principles in terms of addressing human rights issues and fulfilling its advising, monitoring and reporting functions. It would be useful to have information on the relationship between the new institution and existing bodies and civil society. He wondered whether there was a framework in place to enable the new institution to harness the knowledge and experience of the Icelandic Human Rights Centre and to liaise with other national and international organizations; whether the human, technical and financial resources available were sufficient for the institution to fully execute its mandate; and how the State party planned to overcome any obstacles that could prevent the institution from fulfilling its mission.

11. He would be interested to hear whether the anti-corruption measures taken by institutions such as the Office of the Prime Minister, the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health and the Parliamentary Ombudsman were adequately coordinated; what measures were in place to ensure that no critical areas were being overlooked in the fight against corruption; how many employers had introduced procedures for handling internal reports from whistle-blowers; what percentage of workplaces with more than 50 employees had implemented such procedures; and whether the procedures conformed to the relevant guidance. He would appreciate any available statistical data on the utilization of the whistle-blower system since the introduction of the Whistle-Blower Protection Act (No. 40/2020). He wondered whether the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health had imposed any fines on employers who had failed to establish whistle-blowing procedures and whether the State party had taken steps to raise awareness and provide training to ensure the proper enforcement of the Act.

12. He would appreciate a response to the Committee's concerns that certain provisions of the Information Act (No. 140/2012) were insufficiently robust and to allegations that some public officials had attempted to withhold information that could prove damaging or implicate them in wrongdoing. He wished to know what the current status was of the "Fishrot" case; what the expected timeline was for its conclusion; how the seven cases that related to corruption within the executive branch had been brought to the public's attention; and whether the new legal framework under the Whistle-Blower Protection Act and Act No. 64/2020 on the Prevention of Conflicts of Interest within the Icelandic Government Offices had been effective in preventing and combating similar crimes.

13. He wished to hear more about the steps taken to ensure adequate human and financial resources to combat corruption, and he would appreciate updated information on the current budget and staffing levels of the District Prosecutor's Office and the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police. He wished to know whether the District Prosecutor's Office had sufficient resources to effectively fulfil its mandate following the dissolution of the Office of the Special Prosecutor, and whether the District Prosecutor's Office conducted investigations into past, current and potential future criminal activities. With regard to oversight mechanisms in the banking and finance sector, it would be helpful to have clarification of the roles, responsibilities and duties of management boards, and he would welcome further details on the organizational structure of the Judicial Administration and on how its members were appointed. In relation to the ban on the most senior government officials taking on lobbyist roles for six months after leaving their government position, he wondered whether it was sufficient to apply the restriction solely to those roles, whether a six-month period was adequate to mitigate potential conflicts of interest, and how many violations of the law, if any, the oversight mechanism had identified.

14. **Mr. Ndiaye** said that he wished to know what mechanisms had been established under Act No. 151/2020 on the Administration of Matters Concerning Equality to guarantee effective remedies in discrimination cases; whether the Equality Complaints Committee was the only such complaints mechanism available in Iceland; how many complaints had been received and investigated by that Committee, and how many individuals had been prosecuted and convicted as a result; what measures had been adopted, in consultation with civil society organizations, to inform the public, particularly disadvantaged social groups, about the complaints mechanism; and what steps had been taken to enforce the Act and ensure the effective prosecution of perpetrators and reparations for victims.

15. He would welcome additional information on the implementation of the measures to prosecute perpetrators of hate speech and to compensate victims. He would be interested to learn whether the working group on hate speech set up by the Prime Minister in 2022 was the main body responsible for combating hate speech; what measures it had adopted to combat hate speech; what steps had been taken to ensure the working group's recommendations were followed; and what action the State party had taken to raise awareness among the public and judicial officials of the current legislative framework in that area.

16. He would be grateful to learn how hate propaganda was defined under the amended Media Act, whether hate speech was still regarded as hate propaganda, what body was responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Media Act and how its decision-making process worked. It would be helpful to know under what circumstances fines were levied, the amount of the fines imposed and how the State party ensured a balance between upholding freedom of expression and combating hate speech. He wondered whether Iceland enlisted the support of the main Christian churches and trade unions in efforts to prevent hate speech against Muslims, other religious minorities and migrants, and what other measures had been adopted, in consultation with civil society organizations, to hold social media services accountable for hate speech, while respecting freedom of expression.

17. **Mr. Carazo** said that he would be interested to hear which sectors of the economy were dominated by men; what the outcome had been of media campaigns such as "#kvennastarfi" aimed at reducing gender segregation in the labour market and whether any new initiatives had been launched to that end; what progress had been made in closing the gender pay gap since the introduction of the equal pay certification scheme; and how the State party was addressing the challenges faced by small companies in becoming certified under the scheme. He would appreciate recent data on gender distribution in decision-making

positions in key sectors, including the executive branch, the foreign service, academia and the judiciary. It would be interesting to learn how that data compared with that of previous years. He wished to know what measures were being taken to ensure greater involvement of women in senior decision-making roles in the private sector, especially in companies with a high proportion of men; how the Government addressed the lack of access to public childcare programmes and the concentration of women in part-time employment, which adversely affected women's participation in decision-making; how the Directorate of Equality handled cases of multiple discrimination; whether any plans were in place to strengthen the Directorate's work; and whether any other policies or practices had been introduced to remedy shortcomings that hindered the assessment and achievement of equal pay between men and women.

18. He would welcome statistics on the implementation of article 22 (3) of the Act on Services for Disabled People with Long-term Support Needs, which gave priority to persons with disabilities for jobs within the Government and municipalities if they had equal or better qualifications than other applicants. He wished to know on how many occasions persons with disabilities had been given priority access to such jobs and how Iceland sought to combat discrimination against migrants in the labour market.

19. **Mr. El Haiba** said that he wished to know what specific measures the State party had taken to raise public awareness of domestic violence, particularly among migrant women; what the outcome had been of the "Breaking the Silence" campaign; what the evaluation criteria for the campaign were; whether the number of reports of violence had increased during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic; and what the impact had been of measures to enhance the investigation of domestic violence crimes. He would welcome data on the number of investigations, prosecutions and protection measures. He wished to know what steps had been taken to ensure access to justice for vulnerable people, including foreign women; what measures the State party had taken to increase the resources allocated to services for victims of gender-based and domestic violence, particularly for young migrant women and women with disabilities; and how the State party ensured that those services were accessible to all. He wondered what specific measures the State party had taken to ensure that unnecessary surgical procedures were not carried out on intersex minors and that surgery respected their human rights, what the findings had been of the working group on the rights of intersex children and how those findings would be incorporated into future legislation.

The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4.15 p.m.

20. **A representative of Iceland** said that her country's periodic report, the Committee's concluding observations and information on the communications procedure were published on the Government's website in Icelandic and English. The national human rights institution had been tasked with promoting and engaging in public debate on human rights issues.

21. **A representative of Iceland** said that training on the Covenant was provided to the police and judges as part of the syllabus on the obligations of Iceland under international law.

22. **A representative of Iceland** said that the green paper on human rights had been drafted in consultation with key stakeholders and had been integral to the establishment of the national human rights institution. Iceland had a dualist system of law, and all legal provisions were interpreted in accordance with the principles of international law. Reference was made to the Covenant and other international human rights instruments in the explanatory notes to the Constitution, which guided its interpretation. No statistics were available on references to the Covenant in court cases. In 2013, the law had been amended to prohibit the detention of minors with adult prisoners in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The reservation to article 20 (1) was under review but, in the opinion of the Icelandic Government, the article limited freedom of expression. Its reservation was not incompatible with the object and purpose of the Covenant.

23. The national human rights institution would conform fully with the Paris Principles. It would be an independent institution with a broad mandate. While it would not directly receive complaints related to human rights violations, it would provide human rights advice and assistance to individuals. Its budget would be 223.9 million Icelandic krónur and any additional funding would be approved by the parliament. The knowledge and experience of the Icelandic Human Rights Centre had been taken into account during the drafting of the

bill establishing the new national human rights institution. The institution would have a special advisory board to guide its work, and it would consult and collaborate with other bodies with which its mandate overlapped.

24. **A representative of Iceland** said that her country took a multifaceted approach to combating corruption that was grounded in the Constitution and that promoted democracy, integrity and transparency. The Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Justice were primarily responsible for the development and implementation of anti-corruption policy. Iceland had been a member of the Financial Action Task Force since 1992, was one of the original signatories of the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions, was a member of the Working Group on Bribery in International Business Transactions and had a robust legal framework for mutual legal assistance in criminal matters. It cooperated with other States on investigations into corruption offences.

25. Pursuant to a recent amendment to the Police Act, an independent quality control commissioner had been appointed under the Ministry of Justice to promote better law enforcement and oversee the performance of police officers' duties in accordance with the relevant legislation and regulations. A revised code of conduct for the police and coastguard had been adopted in 2024 that set out rules governing issues such as transparency, confidentiality, conflicts of interest and the use of social media. Disciplinary measures had been established in case of violation of the code.

26. **A representative of Iceland** said that the Office of the Prime Minister was responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Whistle-Blower Protection Act, in consultation with the Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health. Information on the complaints procedure was provided on the Administration's website. The Parliamentary Ombudsman's functions remained the same and there was no need for additional resources.

27. If a government entity refused to provide information pursuant to the Information Act, a complaint could be filed with an independent complaints committee, which had on several occasions granted access to information. Cases could also be brought to court or the Parliamentary Ombudsman. In 2019, a special adviser on access to information had been hired in accordance with an amendment to the Act. That adviser facilitated access to information and gave guidance to civil servants and the general public on the correct interpretation of the Act. Seminars were held for civil servants to raise awareness of access to information, and the Government facilitated searches of official correspondence by the media and other interested parties.

28. The Judicial Administration, an independent administrative body that had been established pursuant to the Act on the Judiciary in 2018, was responsible for overseeing the courts' internal operations, appointing chief district judges, handling complaints against judges and providing training. The Administration also prepared court funding proposals.

29. **A representative of Iceland** said that the budget for the District Prosecutor's Office had been increased and more staff had been hired by the police financial intelligence unit. In 2023, the Ministry of Justice had presented a law enforcement action plan to strengthen measures to combat organized crime, and the police had received a significant increase in funding to strengthen their investigative capacity for organized crime and corruption. Investigation teams had been formed to work across districts, and the team's steering group was headed by the district prosecutor. European law enforcement cooperation had been stepped up through the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol).

30. **A representative of Iceland** said that new rules on banking governance, risk management and oversight had been introduced, and the Financial Supervisory Authority and the Central Bank had been merged in 2020 to improve financial oversight and decision-making.

31. **A representative of Iceland** said that the Directorate of Equality was responsible for handling complaints submitted under equality laws and issuing related rulings. Between 2020 and 2023, the Equality Complaints Committee had received 86 complaints regarding

discrimination. In 2023, it had issued decisions in 22 cases, mostly in relation to gender discrimination, and its rulings were binding. Complaints of unfair treatment by the State or local authorities could be lodged with the Parliamentary Ombudsman or the courts.

32. The Directorate of Equality was responsible for oversight of the laws on equality and related complaints mechanisms, including the Equality Complaints Committee. An information poster in Icelandic, English and Polish about the laws had been distributed to approximately 250 companies, institutions and schools in 2024, and an online meeting with trade union organizations had focused on their ability to file complaints of discrimination on behalf of members. The Directorate was also developing promotional material for its website and for distribution on social media platforms to boost awareness of the different grounds of discrimination covered by the laws on equality.

33. **A representative of Iceland** said that gender-based violence was being addressed through legislative amendments, parliamentary resolutions, action plans, awareness-raising campaigns and funding allocations. In 2023, the Gender Equality Fund had allocated \$440,000 to projects that provided support and counselling to victims and perpetrators of violence, with an emphasis on services in rural areas. Recipients of the funding included the women's shelter in the northern city of Akureyri and an awareness-raising campaign on gender-based violence with an emphasis on rural areas and women of foreign origin. Increased demand for the services of the "Domestic Peace" project, which offered treatment to perpetrators of violence, reflected the interest of perpetrators in seeking help.

34. Legislative efforts included the planning and introduction of amendments to bring national laws into line with the Istanbul Convention and a national action plan on the Convention's implementation. An action plan was in place to address sexual violence for the period 2023–2025, and an online emergency chat service had been introduced alongside the national emergency telephone number.

35. **A representative of Iceland** said that a mandatory course on violence and power relations was part of the training programme for police officers; the course provided a comprehensive examination of the causes, consequences and circumstances of violence and its various manifestations, and also covered women's experiences of the justice system. The Centre for Police Training and Professional Development regularly offered courses on gender-based violence.

36. Changes had been made to the legal status of victims of crimes and their involvement in judicial proceedings; amendments to the legal definition of sexual violence, including new provisions on digital sexual violence and rape, had also been introduced. The impact of those changes would be assessed by late 2025. An action plan had been published in March 2023 on the handling of cases of sexual violence with a view to preventing crime, ensuring the efficient processing of such cases by the justice system and improving the procedural experience for all parties. Funding had been allocated to the police and other key actors for its implementation and an online progress dashboard was updated every six months. The latest information indicated that fewer cases of sexual offences were pending than had previously been the case and that processing times had been reduced.

37. **A representative of Iceland** said that a rise in hate speech was being tackled through legislative amendments that had come into force in 2022 and had rendered hate speech relating to national or ethnic origin, disability or sex characteristics punishable under the General Penal Code. A draft action plan to combat hate speech had been developed in 2023, based on the recommendations of a working group on hate speech set up by the Prime Minister, but had been rejected by the parliament. The police received regular training on hate crime and hate speech and related topics, such as multiculturalism, diversity and extremism. The Directorate of Equality had launched an awareness-raising campaign on hate speech in February 2023; more than half of respondents to a public survey had stated that the campaign had encouraged them to reflect on their speech. The recommendation on combating hate speech issued by the Council of Europe had been translated into Icelandic and published, and training programmes on handling hate crimes had been conducted for law enforcement officials and legal professionals.

38. **A representative of Iceland** said that the Media Act had been amended to incorporate the amended Audiovisual Media Services Directive of the European Union, thus enhancing

the legal framework for protecting vulnerable groups from hate speech and prohibiting media service providers from encouraging terrorism or criminal conduct or inciting hatred based on a number of grounds, including race, sex, sexuality, age, disability, political life, religious belief or cultural, economic, social or other position in society. Although the amendments did not cover social media, they did cover video-sharing platforms, and the fines set out for sharing videos that breached the amended law were applicable to media service providers and video-sharing platforms that fell under national jurisdiction. Since January 2024, the Icelandic Media Commission had been working to increase media literacy and raise awareness of the effects of the Internet on children and young persons. The Media Commission had taken over the Icelandic Safer Internet Centre and had set up a youth council to involve young persons in the development of educational material and research that targeted their peers.

39. **A representative of Iceland** said that, as of the end of June 2024, more than 600 companies and institutions had received equal pay certification under the Act on Equal Pay Certification, which covered more than 80 per cent of the targeted workforce. More than 120 companies and institutions had obtained equal pay confirmation under a simplified procedure for small businesses. The Gender Equality Act, had strengthened the supervisory role of the Directorate of Equality concerning the issuance of certificates and confirmations, and the Directorate was able to impose fines on companies for non-compliance. The certification process had encouraged workplaces to consider equality in other areas, such as gender ratios and job categories, and software had been developed to simplify job categorization and pay analysis. The remaining gender pay gap was mostly due to the gender segregation of the labour market.

40. The Gender Equality Act also provided for compulsory education on equality and gender at every level of education. The Directorate of Equality had launched multiple initiatives to tackle stereotypes, including the “Harmless” campaign that focused on sexual harassment and microaggressions against marginalized groups. Despite the use of quotas to increase women’s representation on the boards of private companies, women remained underrepresented in leadership roles. Since 2018, the Government had supported the development of an equality scale to monitor gender equality among the management and executive boards of Icelandic companies, and the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour had signed an agreement on ways to increase the number of women in management positions in the private sector.

41. **A representative of Iceland** said that initiatives to address gender equality on the labour market covered all genders. A plan had been introduced in 2019 to encourage men to become teachers, since teaching was a female-dominated industry. A public childcare system and changes to the parental leave system to increase the benefits granted to men were intended to support gender equality on the labour market.

42. **A representative of Iceland** said that the detailed assessment of whether surgical changes to a child’s sex characteristics were medically necessary included consideration of the consequences of not performing surgery or of postponing surgery until a later date. A team of experts had been appointed in 2022 to provide services for intersex minors at the national hospital.

43. **Ms. Kran**, referring to the attempted discrediting of journalists who had reported on the “Fishrot” case, said that she wished to know what measures were in place to ensure that investigations into journalists’ work did not violate freedom of expression or intimidate journalists. More generally, she would like to know how the State party guaranteed the freedom and independence of the media and protected journalists from harassment, intimidation and reprisals.

44. **Mr. El Haiba** said that he would appreciate clarification of whether the women’s shelter in Akureyri was in a rural area and of the accessibility of its services for victims of violence, particularly in terms of language or other potential barriers. It would be useful to know what recourse was available to parents who disagreed with medical decisions concerning their intersex children. He asked whether rural areas enjoyed good access to the Internet and other new technologies, and how such technologies were used to document human rights violations.

45. **Mr. Ndiaye** said that he would appreciate an explanation of the State party's position concerning the law on defamation and survivors of domestic or gender-based violence who denounced the abuse that they had suffered. He also wished to know whether there were plans to amend the General Penal Code to prevent the handing down of prison sentences for defamation, in keeping with the Committee's general comment No. 34 (2011) on the freedoms of opinion and expression.

46. **Mr. Teraya** said that he would appreciate more information on the projected effectiveness of the Whistle-Blower Protection Act and Act No 64/2020 on the Prevention of Conflicts of Interest within the Icelandic Government Offices and on the roles and responsibilities of management boards in the banking industry concerning anti-corruption measures.

47. **Mr. Carazo** said that he wished to receive more information on the measures taken to address discrimination in the labour market against persons with disabilities, migrants and persons hailing from areas with lower economic activity.

48. **Mr. Santos Pais** said that he would be interested to know what measures were taken to inform officers of the prosecution service about the Covenant and to learn more about the independence of the prosecution service, particularly given that the Director of Public Prosecutions was appointed by the Minister of Justice for an indefinite period. Clarification of which body was responsible for the investigation and prosecution of cases of gender-based violence, and the provisions in place to address indefinite solitary confinement would also be appreciated.

49. **Mr. Gómez Martínez** said that information on the head of the Judicial Administration and on that entity's relationship to the Ministry of Justice would be helpful. He also wished to know whether there was a warning system in place to help to detect the risks to women who had decided to report abuse to the police.

50. **A representative of Iceland** said that, regarding the Committee's Views on communication No. 2818/2016 (*X v. Iceland*), the issue at stake was the length of pretrial detention – a topic that would be addressed as part of a review of the execution of sentences, alongside the duration of solitary confinement, another area in which the existing arrangements had been criticized.

51. **A representative of Iceland** said that the northern part of Iceland was considered a rural area by European standards. The location of the women's shelter in Akureyri was intended to make it accessible to women seeking assistance, and the existence of two separate shelters allowed for the removal of survivors of violence from small communities in the interests of their own protection. Survivors could seek assistance at the women's shelters and the law provided for their access to social services and for the protection of children.

52. The most popular social media platforms in Iceland were owned by international companies that did not fall under national jurisdiction. Internet access was guaranteed across the country, and a special project had ensured the provision of high-speed Internet access in rural areas.

53. **A representative of Iceland** said that the Judicial Administration was part of the judicial branch of power, independent of the legislative and executive powers, and was a fully independent organization of the judicial system. The Minister of Justice was able to select one member of its governing body and was otherwise bound to appoint four members who were nominated, respectively, by the Supreme Court, national judges, district judges and court employees other than judges.

54. **A representative of Iceland** said that the Director of Public Prosecutions, who was appointed for life by the Minister of Justice, was fully independent, and was responsible for the training of prosecutors, including on human rights obligations relevant to their work. Cases of gender-based violence were investigated by the police and prosecuted by the police or the District Prosecutor's Office, depending on the gravity of a case; the two bodies cooperated well. The Director of Public Prosecutions could also take cases to the Supreme Court. The Centre for Police Training and Professional Development provided training for prosecutors on human rights and gender-based violence, and the Judicial Administration

provided training on sexual offences and gender-based violence and worked to raise awareness of those crimes.

55. **A representative of Iceland** said that, although a programme was in place to help persons with disabilities find jobs and promote equality on the labour market, no statistics were available on the number of persons with disabilities who had been selected for a position. The programme had focused on changing the approach to persons with disabilities in the workplace to consider the different work capacity of each person. Discriminatory results in the labour market were often due to the segregation of migrants on the labour market: a recent study on migrant integration had identified a lack of Icelandic language proficiency as a key element in labour market segregation; another factor was the concentration of migrants in the low-skill sectors of tourism and construction. The Government and its social partners were working together to address the issue. The trade unions were able to respond to complaints raised by non-members and all workers were therefore guaranteed assistance to learn about and claim their labour rights.

56. **A representative of Iceland** said that the police had been given training on intimate partner homicides, which supported the assessment of risks in relationships. A video created by the Reykjavík Metropolitan Police on coercive control had been shared on social media to raise awareness among victims of domestic abuse and their friends and family. Procedures for handling cases of domestic abuse were continually evolving, and a multidisciplinary team was being developed to review such cases and assess risks in relationships.

57. **A representative of Iceland** said that the language barrier was an issue for migrant victims of domestic violence. Telephone interpretation services were used by public institutions to provide interpretation into English from more than 200 languages. Social media campaigns on domestic violence targeted persons who used social media in languages other than Icelandic in order to reach the migrant population.

58. **A representative of Iceland** said that medically necessary surgery on intersex children was subject to the consent of the parents or guardian; surgery on older children required the consent of the child, their parents and a committee of experts that took into account the best interests of the child and the child's views.

59. **A representative of Iceland** said that the Gender Equality Act provided protection against harassment on the grounds of religious belief within and outside the labour market. The public mocking, defamation, denigration or threatening of a person or group of persons, including through pictures or symbols of religion, was liable to a fine and a prison sentence of up to 2 years. Non-governmental organizations and institutions, including trade unions, had been extensively consulted on the draft action plan to combat hate speech.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.