



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 2453rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 4 August 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Crickley

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention *(continued)*

Twentieth to twenty-second periodic reports of Greece (continued)
(CERD/C/GRC/20-22; CERD/C/GRC/Q/20-22)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Greece took places at the Committee table.*
2. **The Chair** invited the representative of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights to take the floor.
3. **Ms. Gavouneli** (Greek National Commission for Human Rights) said that Greece had faced an unprecedented refugee crisis during the past year, as almost a million people had arrived on its shores and passed through the country. Notwithstanding the disastrous impact of the ongoing economic crisis on the State and civil society, the massive migratory flows had been met with an impressive wave of Greek solidarity with the plight of refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups. However, in the aftermath of the agreement between the European Union and Turkey, almost 57,000 people had been left stranded on Greek territory.
4. The National Commission had urgently appealed to the Greek State, the United Nations, European Union institutions and international organizations to take all appropriate measures to protect the life, health and safety of all people living in Greece and to effectively manage migratory flows towards the European Union in conditions of dignity. It had repeatedly emphasized the need to revise the European Union asylum system, including the Dublin Regulation, so that it focused on human dignity and the safeguarding of human rights.
5. As the migrants would clearly remain in the country for a lengthy period of time, it was essential to take immediate action against racism and xenophobia. As young Syrian families move into subsidized housing, large numbers of Arabic and Farsi-speaking children awaited enrolment in the Greek education system, migrants competed for unskilled, low-paid work in the informal economy in a context of high unemployment, and vulnerable groups made additional demands on the crumbling health system, there was concern about a possible increase in hate speech and racist incidents.
6. The National Commission had issued statements on the educational needs of children with disabilities, refugee children and other vulnerable groups. It also actively supported the Racist Violence Recording Network, which remained the most effective mechanism for the reporting of hate crimes in the country and in which more than 35 NGOs participated. Although the data published by the Network constituted a reference point for national and international human rights institutions, responsibility for the systematic recording of hate crimes lay primarily with the State. With a view to avoiding a resurgence of racist policies, it was essential to improve established State procedures and to strengthen the country's regulatory framework and institutional arsenal. The National Commission therefore welcomed as a first positive step the establishment by the Greek Ministry of Justice of the National Council against Racism and Intolerance, in which both the National Commission and the Racist Violence Recording Network were represented.
7. The potential of existing mechanisms should be fully developed and corrective action taken to remedy any shortcomings. Judges and prosecutors should familiarize themselves with the relevant rules and create a robust corpus of case law against hate speech, including in the social media. The social and enforcement services of the State should be accorded the time and space to fully develop their potential and to achieve

verifiable results. Continuous monitoring of compliance with the rules was vital not only in the aftermath of the economic and migratory crises but also to ensure the welfare of the Roma population, vulnerable groups and society at large.

8. **Mr. Papaioannou** (Greece) said that a great deal of effort had been invested in the enactment of effective anti-racist legislation. It would take some time, however, to achieve the requisite results. For example, prosecutors and judges would need to be trained to implement the legislation.

9. **Ms. Rossidi** (Greece) said that the Greek Constitution was perfectly compatible with article 4 of the Convention. According to the Committee's general recommendation No. 15 on article 4, States should be vigilant in proceeding against organizations that promoted or incited racial discrimination. Greek legislation presented a series of options in that regard. For instance, a union that pursued an aim that was illegitimate or contrary to public order could be dissolved by a court decision. The new anti-racist Law No. 4285/2014 criminalized the establishment of or participation in a legal entity or union that systematically engaged in acts punishable under the Law. It also provided for the liability of legal entities or unions and for the imposition of administrative sanctions, fines and other penalties.

10. Democracy and society were protected against criminal activities by political parties and their members. Thus, all members of Parliament belonging to the Golden Dawn party had been deprived of their immunity and prosecuted for establishing and participating in a criminal organization. State funding of the party had been suspended and members had been convicted of various offences in 21 cases. Racist motives had been detected in two of the cases concerned.

11. Action against hate crimes had been taken in response to recommendations from the Ombudsman, the National Commission for Human Rights and the Racist Violence Recording Network. Two specialized police departments had been established with 68 offices throughout the country. Five special prosecutors had been appointed to investigate racist crimes and training courses had been developed for judges, prosecutors and police officers. Anti-racist legislation had been introduced into the curriculum of the National School of Magistrates in early 2015.

12. The National Board against Racism and Intolerance, an interministerial body, had been established in 2015. Its purpose, in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, was the development of a comprehensive strategy and the drafting of a national plan against racism and intolerance. It had established three working groups, which focused on investigating biased motivation in criminal proceedings, combating hate speech through intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, and human rights and anti-racist education.

13. Undocumented migrants who were victims or material witnesses of racist crimes could be granted a residence permit on humanitarian grounds. Victims of hate crimes could be provided with free legal aid and were exempted from the obligation to pay a fee for filing a criminal complaint. They could also seek compensation from the perpetrator and from the competent Greek authority. A bill on protection of victims of crimes would shortly be submitted to the Parliament.

14. In 2015 the police and prosecutors had launched investigations into 82 incidents concerning racist violence and 16 incidents concerning hate speech. Twenty-five criminal prosecutions had been initiated and 63 cases were still being investigated. Six criminal court judgments (four convictions and two acquittals) had been handed down in 2015. A new bill on equal treatment assigned responsibility for considering complaints of discrimination in the field of employment to the Ombudsman in cooperation with the Labour Inspectorate.

15. **Mr. Katsiavaras** (Greece) said that the Hellenic Police had taken measures to prevent racist crimes. Services had been established for the purpose throughout the country, pursuant to Presidential Decree 132 of 2012, as amended by Presidential Decree 178 of 2014. Two departments and 68 offices, staffed by more than 200 specialized officers, focused on combating discrimination, hatred and violence against individuals or groups on grounds of race, colour, religion, descent, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. Specific instructions for the investigation of such cases had been provided in a Hellenic Police circular issued in November 2014. The officers cooperated with competent State bodies and civil society organizations. Special surveillance was arranged for areas where there was an increased risk of racist assaults. Detailed records were maintained, victims were informed of their rights, and competent services were alerted to the need for medical care, hospitalization and psychological support.

16. Police training curricula included human rights and subjects related to racism, xenophobia, domestic violence, the safeguarding of defendants' rights, and the adoption of security and other measures during demonstrations. A 24-hour telephone hotline for victims of racist crimes had been established by the Hellenic Police in 2013. A complaint form could also be accessed on the Hellenic Police website.

17. **Mr. Kastanas** (Greece) said that international law did not currently authorize international courts or other bodies to determine the existence of a minority group or to enjoin States to officially recognize a minority. Members of groups that were not recognized as minorities nonetheless enjoyed full legal protection against discrimination on the grounds listed in the Convention.

18. With regard to the Muslim minority in Thrace, he drew attention to paragraphs 13 to 15 of the report and stressed that it was unacceptable to subsume the Pomak and Roma communities under a Turkish identity. With a view to ensuring the full integration of the Muslim minority, Greece had adopted a protective framework based on modern human rights standards and had improved the living conditions of members of the minority. Muslim inhabitants of the Dodecanese islands of Rhodes and Kos enjoyed the same religious and cultural rights and incurred the same obligations as other citizens. There were three mosques, two Muslim cemeteries and three Muslim charitable foundations in the two islands.

19. A small number of inhabitants of the northern Greek region of Macedonia spoke a Slavic language. A segment of that community had been promoting the idea of a Macedonian minority through a political party called Rainbow. However, as the party had won only 0.1 per cent of the vote in the 2014 elections to the European Parliament, it had decided not to participate in the 2015 general election. The use of the term Macedonian to characterize the community without any reference to its Slavic identity was an infringement of the rights and identity of the more than 2.5 million Greek Macedonians, who had used the adjective for centuries to denote their regional and cultural provenance. The Slavic community could nonetheless freely express its views and organize cultural events. With regard to the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) concerning the failure to register an association known as the "Home of Macedonian Civilization", he stressed that the use of the qualifier "Macedonian" in that connection could only create confusion. The founders should have used a name that corresponded to their Slav-oriented identity. Moreover, ECHR had rejected as manifestly ill-founded the applicants' complaint that the disputed decision of the domestic court had been based on discriminatory grounds.

20. A large number of Muslim minority associations and NGOs had been registered in Thrace since 2008 and operated freely. No restrictions were imposed on the names used. For instance, the word "Turkish" had been used in the name of a recently registered association to denote the mother tongue of its members. The Greek Roma were not

recognized as a minority but as a vulnerable social group. The Roma themselves had in fact refused to be considered as a minority. The challenges facing them could be tackled by means of social policies and programmes rather than through the application of ethnic criteria. The authorities were taking affirmative action in the areas of health, housing, employment, education, culture and sport, taking into consideration the characteristics and lifestyle of the Roma community.

21. **Mr. Papaioannou** (Greece) said that the authorities were examining ways and means of implementing the three ECHR judgments on violations of the right to freedom of association. Their full implementation was pending for procedural reasons identified by the competent courts, such as the lack of a procedure for the reopening of civil law cases. The decision to register an association fell within the exclusive remit of the courts, which focused on their legality. ECHR had actually dismissed two new complaints alleging violations of freedom of association in December 2015. The Government and the Ministry of Justice were giving high priority to the issue. A bill providing for the establishment of a mechanism to monitor the implementation of ECHR judgments had been drafted and welcomed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

22. **Mr. Economou** (Greece) said that some 800 Roma had benefited from projects to promote the integration of vulnerable groups into the labour market or entrepreneurship, including in the form of Social Cooperatives. Over 2,000 Roma had turned to 1 of the 27 Social Support Centres for Roma and vulnerable social groups for help in finding a job. The Centres also provided a range of primary health-care services in municipalities with Roma settlements. The poor housing conditions of Roma were cause for concern. The Government was implementing environmental upgrading and recovery of urban landscape projects in three regions in an effort partly to improve basic infrastructure in Roma settlements. State and European Union Structural Funds were being used for the implementation of the National Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma 2012-2020. Within the European Union framework, the Government had launched the National Roma Integration Strategy, details of which were provided in the report.

23. **Ms. Toura** (Greece) said that although Roma children were entitled by law to the same schooling as other Greeks, and special measures to promote the education of Roma children had been in place since 1997, educational inadequacy and segregation still existed. The Ministry of Education had adopted a series of proactive measures to address the problem, with a focus on preventing segregation. The “Education of Roma Children” project provided for targeted action to enhance participation of Roma children in education, with particular emphasis on preschool and primary education, including by employing Roma school mediators. For the coming school year, 800 teachers would be employed to teach in so-called “reception and support classes” designed to facilitate the integration of children whose mother tongue was not Greek into regular schools, which were often attended by Roma children. The “Education of Roma Children” project had thus far benefited 13,500 pupils and had led to a significant increase in Roma enrolment rates in primary and secondary education in recent years.

24. Migrant and refugee children were entitled to the same schooling as children born in Greece, irrespective of their residence status. Administrative changes had been introduced to facilitate enrolment of foreign-born students who lacked the documents that were normally required. The recent amendment to legislation governing the acquisition of Greek citizenship was expected to further enhance migrant and refugee children’s participation in education, as school enrolment was a key condition for acquisition of citizenship. Enrolment of the nearly 20,000 refugee children had been made a priority for the coming school year. For practical reasons, preschool and early primary education for migrant children would be provided initially in open hospitality centres and evening classes would be offered in schools close to those centres for all other primary and secondary school

students. The classes, which aimed to facilitate the children's subsequent integration into regular schools, would be run by teachers with experience in bilingual education and education of children from the Muslim minority in Thrace.

25. As part of the Council of Europe's "No Hate Speech Movement", a national committee against hate speech had been made responsible for designing, implementing and coordinating actions to prevent and combat hate speech in formal and informal education. The committee cooperated with the National Board against Racism and Intolerance, among others.

26. **Mr. Papaioannou** (Greece) said that his Government was keenly aware that Roma inclusion was the biggest challenge for Greece. The fact that Roma had not been victims of major violence was no cause for complacency. The different integration projects and programmes carried out over the years had been insufficiently evaluated and produced no tangible results. The National Strategy for Roma Inclusion was expected to be more successful and his delegation looked forward to reporting on outcomes in future exchanges with the Committee.

27. **Ms. Papageorgiou** (Greece) said that the National Action Plan on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women comprised, among others, victim support through 40 Counselling Centres, 21 shelters and an SOS telephone helpline. Those services were available to all women victims of violence. In order to facilitate access for women refugees, the General Secretariat for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), had prepared a manual containing information on Greek legislation on gender-based violence and the services provided. The document was currently being translated into English and Arabic and other languages spoken by refugees and would be distributed shortly. A database of interpreters had been created and staff of Counseling Centres, shelters and the SOS helpline had been trained in issues such as the protection of women refugees, psychological first aid and asylum procedures. During its five years of operation the SOS helpline had received over 23,000 calls and 294 e-mails, 28 per cent of which were from migrant women. In 2015, of 3,390 women using the Counseling Centres, 307 had been non-European Union citizens, and of the 252 women in shelters, 86 had come from outside the European Union.

28. **Ms. Papakosta** (Greece) said that more than 150,000 migrants had been rescued in nearly 4,000 rescue operations since 2015, including a large number of children. The timely detection, rescue and safe transportation of migrants, and respect for the principle of non-refoulement in the course of sea border monitoring, was strictly observed by Hellenic Coast Guard officers. The Hellenic Coast Guard had designated a fundamental rights officer, who worked closely with Frontex fundamental rights officers. Coast Guard officers also participated regularly in Frontex-led training on fundamental rights (training of trainers) with the view to building a pool of accredited experts that could deliver training to other staff.

29. **Mr. Papadopoulos** (Greece) said that the authorities did their utmost to ensure adequate standards of hygiene and safety in detention centres for irregular migrants. Inmates were entitled to visits from relatives or close friends in specially designated areas. They also had access to primary health-care services and psychosocial support. Inmates requiring medical treatment that could not be delivered on site were escorted by the police to hospitals or other health-care facilities. There were separate facilities for men and women, and unaccompanied minors awaiting transfer were held in units separate from adults.

30. The Hellenic Police managed mixed migratory flows with professionalism and respect. A series of initiatives were being carried out to improve the protection of fundamental rights in the context of border management operations. Those included: the

designation of a national fundamental rights focal point; translation into Greek of the Frontex Fundamental Rights Training for Border Guards manual; and fundamental rights training for police and Coast Guard officers. Fifty-four officers had been trained thus far. There was also a network of regional focal points responsible for ensuring respect for fundamental rights in the areas under their jurisdiction, and for investigating cases and allegations of ill-treatment. Law enforcement officials found guilty of ill-treatment were subject to disciplinary sanctions.

31. **Ms. Lambrianidou** (Greece) said that the Asylum Service had been operational for three years only. Since June 2013, over 40,000 persons had filed applications for international protection, 1,500 of whom were unaccompanied minors. As of May 2015, asylum had been granted at first instance in nearly 7,000 cases. By May 2016, 4,288 applications had been filed, 2,859 of which on the Aegean islands. In order to improve and expedite procedures, the Asylum Service had doubled the number of its staff and expanded structures and operations across Greece, with the assistance of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

32. In order to cope with the mass influx of nearly 50,000 refugees, Greece had embarked on a pre-registration exercise, together with UNHCR and EASO, registering refugees seeking asylum in Greece or wishing to enter into the relocation mechanism. After pre-registration, applicants were given asylum cards pending the final decision on their application. By the end of July 2016, nearly 29,000 had been pre-registered.

33. **Mr. Kosmidis** (Greece) said that of the 565,377 residence permits granted to third-country nationals, 1,800 had been granted on humanitarian grounds; those included 39 victims or important witnesses of racist crimes or other criminal acts and 17 victims of human trafficking. Under the new legislation governing the acquisition of Greek citizenship, over 8,198 foreign children born in Greece had been granted citizenship since 2015.

34. In response to questions regarding the implementation of labour legislation in tourism and agriculture, he said that over the past five years, 10,449 inspections had been carried out in the agricultural sector; 250 breaches had been found and 280 persons arrested. There were no data for the tourism sector. He could inform the Committee that Greece was considering ratifying the International Labour Organization Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129). The Code of Immigration and Social Integration had been amended to include a provision whereby temporary work permits could be granted to third-country nationals without a residence permit, provided there was an urgent need for agricultural workers and vacancies that could not be filled otherwise. Over 100 Migrant Integration Councils had been set up throughout Greece and a total of 36 million euros had been allocated for the integration of migrants and refugees in the period 2007-2013. At 5.4 per cent, the unemployment rate for migrants was comparable to that of Greek nationals.

35. **Mr. Papadopoulous** (Greece) confirmed that unemployment among migrants was not a major problem, possibly because the migrant population in Greece was very young. During the 2015 crisis, Greece had applied the European Commission Hotspot approach to managing exceptional migratory flows, although it had only become fully operational as of March 2016. Refugees were registered at First Reception Centres, where they were informed about their rights and asylum procedures; identification took place in Citizenship Identification Centres. Special focus was placed on vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied minors, disabled persons, pregnant women, and victims of torture, sexual exploitation or human trafficking, irrespective of whether or not they had applied for asylum. There were currently some 60,000 places for asylum seekers and persons awaiting voluntary return. Temporary facilities set up during the refugee crisis in 2015 were often below standard, but efforts were being made to improve conditions. Persons whose application for asylum on the Aegean islands was rejected were returned to Turkey in

accordance with the EU-Turkey Statement. The operation of the reception centres was a tremendous challenge for the Greek Government.

36. The situation of unaccompanied minors was also a major concern. Fifty-six unaccompanied minors were currently in detention centres awaiting transfer to adequate facilities. There were 704 places for a total of over 2,000 unaccompanied minors; 346 were temporarily housed in special units of First Reception Centres or Citizenship Identification Centres pending their transfer. Given their numbers, it had not been possible to provide access to guardianship institutions for all. Only in exceptional cases minors were returned, in cooperation with the International Organization of Migration (IOM), provided that their parents could be located in the country of origin. The situation was far from ideal; some 360 more places were under construction, but an additional 500 at least were needed. The Government would use European Union funds to close the gap.

The meeting was suspended at 11.35 a.m. and resumed at 11.45 a.m.

37. **Mr. Marugán** (Country Rapporteur) said that it would be useful to have a written copy of the statistical data provided by Ms. Rossidi. He asked whether the Government intended to increase the number of special prosecutors and to allow those prosecutors to work exclusively on cases involving hate crimes. He wished to know whether the 200 officers assigned to the special police units dealt exclusively with hate crimes and how many reports of hate crimes were submitted to those units compared with the number submitted to other authorities.

38. He requested further information about the financial and human resources allocated to the National Council against Racism and Intolerance. Given that, in all the years that Law 927/1979 had been in force, only six cases had been brought to justice for violations of that law, he asked what had been hindering its implementation. While the amendments contained in Law 4285/2014 had improved the situation, it was important to ensure that the law was fully implemented.

39. He asked whether the courts had found “Golden Dawn” to be an organization that promoted and incited racial discrimination and, if so, what the Government was doing to declare illegal and prohibit that organization, pursuant to article 4 of the Convention. Referring to legislation that provided for the appointment of more prosecutors to handle cases of racially-motivated crimes, he asked whether that piece of legislation was still a bill or whether it had been passed into law. Pointing out that criminal law was not the only means of dealing with hate crimes, he requested information on administrative sanctions handed down in that regard.

40. According to some NGOs, police officers were charging victims of hate crimes a 100-euro fee to report such crimes. He asked what training was being given to police officers to prevent such practices. He requested further information, including statistical data, on the improvements achieved for the Roma with respect to housing, health care and education. Commending the adoption of legal provisions to ensure access to health care for vulnerable groups, he asked how it would be decided whether an individual was vulnerable and what training would be provided to ensure that the provisions were properly implemented.

41. Migrants had expressed frustration, anxiety and uncertainty about the deal between the European Union and Turkey and how it would affect them. There seemed to be a lack of information in that regard. In the light of the incidents of violence against women in migrant reception centres, he asked how the police were protecting people in those centres.

42. He wished to know what budget had been allocated to schools to enable them to accommodate the large numbers of Arabic-speaking and Farsi-speaking minor refugees. He asked how the labour inspectorate monitored the situation of migrant workers in the

informal economy, many of whom reportedly worked under harsh conditions. Lastly, he asked whether Greece intended to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97) and the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

43. **Ms. Shepherd** said that she hoped that the Integrated Action Plan for Greek Roma and the National Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma 2012-2020 would serve to overcome the obstacles hindering Roma integration. She asked whether Greece had ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Given the largely unfavourable opinion of the Roma in Greek society, she hoped that the general public would be educated about the situation of the Roma and other minority groups that faced discrimination, such as Bangladeshis. She asked whether police officers received cultural awareness training and whether any special crime prevention strategies were used to protect the Roma from burglary and other crimes.

44. She wished to know whether there were any Africans among the refugees, migrants and asylum seekers arriving in the country or any who were already settled in the country and, if so, whether there had been any complaints of racial discrimination against them. In the light of the Committee's general recommendation No. 34, it was entirely legitimate for the Committee to ask the State party about its plans to participate in the International Decade for People of African Descent.

45. **Mr. Avtonomov** asked whether any assessments had been conducted of the various programmes for Roma and other minorities, as well as any assessments of the implementation of relevant laws. If so, he wished to know who was responsible for conducting those assessments. While he understood the difficulty of referring to the Slavic minority living in Greece as "Macedonian", it would be wise to establish a dialogue with the members of that minority group to agree on a name by which they could be called. It was important for them to have opportunities to develop their own culture and language. The fact that they lacked recognition posed a problem.

46. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** asked whether he had understood correctly that the Government was looking into the possibility of reopening a case that had already been decided by the European Court of Human Rights. He hoped not, as doing so could be interpreted as allowing the case to be pleaded by instalments.

47. **Mr. Kastanas** (Greece) said that, at the current juncture, his Government did not see a legal, social need to ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The Government did not deny that there was a small group of persons living in Greece who spoke a Slavic language. Members of that group were at liberty to organize their own cultural events and speak their own language in private. The decision not to recognize them as a national minority was based on solid legal and factual arguments.

48. **Ms. Rossidi** (Greece) said that she would provide all relevant statistical data in writing. The five special prosecutors did not work exclusively on hate crimes, which would be impossible given the budget cuts in the judiciary. Instead, efforts were under way to facilitate networking and exchanges of information among prosecutors.

49. **Mr. Papaioannou** (Greece) said that racism and hate crime were a concern not just in the five towns and cities where special prosecutors had been appointed, but also on small or remote islands where there might be only one or two prosecutors in total. Thus, his Government's priority was to provide training and networking opportunities for all prosecutors rather than assign a small number of them exclusively to hate crimes.

50. **Ms. Rossidi** (Greece) said that the National Council against Racism and Intolerance did receive some funding from the European Union and that it was still a very new body. In

addition to the existing action plans on human rights and the rights of children, a third action plan on combating racism and intolerance would soon be adopted.

51. Whereas Law 927/1979 had not been properly enforced, that shortcoming had been rectified with the implementation of Law 4285/2014. Efforts were being made to properly disseminate that law among the relevant authorities and to raise awareness among the public. While article 4 of the Convention certainly allowed for the prohibition of political parties that promoted and incited racial discrimination, in view of the country's history the prohibition of political parties was not advisable and could be quite dangerous.

52. There had been no court decision stating that "Golden Dawn" was a party that promoted racial discrimination, and there was no criminal liability for legal entities in Greek law. The State was doing its best to enhance the courts' ability to prove that crimes were racially motivated. The National Radio and Television Council was an independent authority and had the power to impose administrative fines for expressions of racial discrimination, but it had not lived up to expectations in that regard. The Government was attempting to draw the Council's attention to its responsibility. Victims of racism were not required to pay any fees to file a police complaint.

53. Regarding the judgment by the European Court of Human Rights, it had been decided that the Court had not properly applied the European Convention on Human Rights in the case. There was currently no legal remedy that would enable the reopening of a civil case following a decision by the European Court of Human Rights. Efforts were currently under way, however, to make such a remedy available.

54. **Mr. Katsiavaras** (Greece) said that the special police units were the only authorities that received reports of hate crimes and that they handled all the reports submitted through the 11414 helpline. From 2013 to 2015, a total of 77 cases of racist violence had been reported via the helpline.

55. **Mr. Papadopoulos** (Greece) said that his Government was carrying out a project to improve access to health care not just for migrants but for all persons in Greece. Under special legal provisions, minors, pregnant women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable persons were entitled to preferential access to health care. His Government was aware of the incidents of violence against women in migrant reception centres and was working to ensure a greater police presence in the centres.

56. **Ms. Toura** (Greece) said that it was difficult to obtain exact statistical data on the number of Roma students in schools, as Greek citizens were not obligated to declare their ethnic origin. Nevertheless, the available data would be provided in writing along with information on the results of the measures taken to integrate Roma children into the education system. School curricula had been updated to focus more on human rights and democratic citizenship and to promote intercultural understanding and tolerance. New curricula for religious education were also being drafted and would focus not only on the Greek Orthodox religion but on other religions as well.

57. **Mr. Khalaf** said that article 81 (a) of the Criminal Code, which established an aggravating circumstance for racially-motivated crimes, could not be considered to be a replacement for article 2 of the repealed Law 927/1979, under which crimes could be prosecuted ex officio. He asked whether prosecution under article 81 (a) required the submission of an individual complaint, or whether offences could also be prosecuted ex officio under that article. Noting that Greece had signed but not ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, he asked whether the State party intended to ratify that Convention. He requested further information and statistical data about the practice of refoulement in Greece. Lastly, he asked how the Government planned to transform the "hotspot" centres from detention centres into open reception centres.

58. **Mr. Murillo Martínez** said that he wished to know more about the international cooperation and assistance provided by, inter alia, the European Union and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with respect to rescuing migrants at sea and caring for unaccompanied minors. He asked what measures were being taken to identify the new strategies and routes being used by human traffickers.

59. **Mr. Calí Tzay** requested clarification as to whether speakers of Slavic languages were free to speak their own language publicly as well as privately.

60. **Mr. Kut**, noting that members of a number of different ethnic groups in Greece were categorized simply as Muslims, asked how the State party distinguished between those groups if their members wished to identify themselves on the basis of something other than their religious beliefs. He saw no reason why linguistic groups should not be allowed to identify themselves as speakers of a particular language if that was their defining characteristic.

61. While the situation of the persons made stateless under article 19 of the previous nationality law had been rectified, other persons who had lost their Greek citizenship with the entry into force of that article also had complaints. He asked whether there was any programme or policy in place to address those complaints.

62. **Mr. Papadopoulos** (Greece) said that his Government did not practise refoulement. Admission requirements were in line with European Union standards, and repatriation was carried out with the support of the International Organization for Migration. The “hotspot” centres were not detention centres but migrant registration centres. The European Union was providing assistance with running the centres.

63. Applications to re-examine decisions to revoke Greek citizenship under article 19 of the previous nationality law were considered on a case-by-case basis. Those decisions remained valid even though the law itself had since been abolished, but if complainants could provide new evidence that they had not left Greece with the intention of permanently settling elsewhere, then their Greek citizenship would be reinstated.

64. **Ms. Rossidi** (Greece) said that article 2 of Law 927/1979 had been replaced by article 2 of the new law. Thus, article 81 (a) of the Criminal Code was an additional provision under which hate crimes could be prosecuted, not a replacement provision.

65. **Mr. Kastanas** (Greece) said that, while individuals were free to identify themselves as they wished, that did not mean that the State was obligated to officially recognize them as members of a minority group if the criteria established in international law were not met.

66. **Ms. Lambrianidou** (Greece) said that a significant percentage of asylum seekers in Greece were African. She would provide exact statistical data in writing.

67. **Mr. Kosmidis** (Greece) said that there were about 19,000 Africans living in Greece as long-term residents. Of those, about half had been admitted to Greece on grounds of family reunification, while the other half had come to the country for reasons of employment. His Government was considering the possibility of ratifying the ILO Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97) and the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). There were no data available on exactly which kinds of violations had been uncovered through labour inspections.

68. **Mr. Marugán** said that, as Greece was the custodian of one of the most complicated European Union borders, the European Union had a responsibility to help Greece control that border and deal with the influx of refugees. Significant progress had been made with respect to hate crimes in the State party, but challenges such as underreporting still remained to be addressed. Further efforts were needed to ensure the integration of the Roma.

He welcomed the fact that the Government planned to abolish the country's blasphemy laws.

69. In the light of the positive economic forecast, Greece should not accept any reversal in its priorities and values with respect to human rights on the ground of budgetary constraints. He hoped to see a greater focus on assessment of the Government's various plans and strategies. Efforts were needed to improve support for unaccompanied minors and to offer clarity about the situation of migrants in the light of the agreement between the European Union and Turkey. The work of the labour inspectorate should be improved, and it should be provided with further financial and human resources.

70. **Mr. Papaioannou** (Greece) said that, while the banning of political parties was a very sensitive subject in the light of the country's modern history, his Government's unwillingness to ban the party in question should by no means be interpreted as an expression of sympathy with the party's ideas or methods. Whenever members of the party engaged in any kind of criminal activity, those actions were investigated, prosecuted and punished. Ideas on the far right of the political spectrum had always existed in Greece, but until 2010 far-right groups had held an extremely marginal place in Greek society. While some supporters of "Golden Dawn" might not be fully aware of the party's ideology, they were attracted by its promotion of racism, intolerance and xenophobia.

71. Greece had actively participated at the European Union level in working groups related to the International Decade for People of African Descent, and work was under way to coordinate the State's participation in activities to celebrate the Decade.

72. Economic crises always affected the most vulnerable members of society, and it was not reasonable to expect that human rights protection mechanisms would not also be affected. The Government was working to address problems in health care, education and refugee protection in the face of a hiring freeze in all areas of the public sector. The Ombudsman would serve as an independent mechanism to ensure accountability for abuses by police officers, prison staff and coast guard authorities, which was a very positive step.

73. The National Radio and Television Council did have the power to impose administrative sanctions and penalties for hate speech, and it had been expected that it would have done so by now. NGOs and international organizations had played an essential role in the handling of the refugee crisis, and the Government was working to establish further procedures for consultation with those organizations.

74. As the philosopher of law and political sciences, Norberto Bobbio, had stated, no nation was free from racial discrimination, and any society could exhibit racist behaviour in the face of a vital threat to its financial interests. While there were signs of racism in Greece, there were also strong signs of solidarity with the weak. Greeks were proud of that spirit of solidarity and would continue to embody that ideal in the face of racial discrimination.

The meeting rose at 13.05 p.m.