



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 1983rd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 17 May 2023, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Paláez Narváez

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (continued)

Seventh periodic report of Slovakia (CEDAW/C/SVK/7; CEDAW/C/SVK/QPR/7)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Slovakia joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Matulay** (Slovakia), introducing his country's seventh periodic report (CEDAW/C/SVK/7), said that many interested parties within the Government were taking action to improve implementation of the Convention in cooperation with the Committee on Gender Equality, in which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were also represented.
3. Act No. 365/2004 on Equal Treatment in Certain Areas and on Protection Against Discrimination (the Anti-Discrimination Act) regulated the application of the principle of equal treatment and specified available remedies for legal protection. The State Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men and Equality of Opportunities (2021–2027) and the corresponding action plan were designed to eliminate all forms of discrimination, violence and harmful practices against women and girls. The National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women (2022–2027) specified policy priorities in the areas of protection of women and children experiencing violence, prevention of violence against women, integrated policies and data collection, and effective remedies for violence against women. Adoption of the National Action Plan met one of the basic conditions in preparation for implementation of the European Union Cohesion Policy.
4. The amendment to the Act on the Police Force adopted on 1 November 2021 enhanced the protection of victims or persons at risk of domestic violence. In addition, intervention centres for victims of domestic violence had begun operating in every region on 1 January 2021, providing victims with psychological and legal assistance. An amendment to the Victims of Crime Act adopted in 2021 enabled victims, including victims of domestic abuse, to request compensation from the State as soon as criminal proceedings were instituted. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family had cooperated with the Government Office in 2021 in providing financial assistance totalling €3 million to organizations that offered residential or outpatient services to victims of domestic violence and their children. The primary goals of the national project on prevention and elimination of gender discrimination were to carry out consultancy activities regarding violence against women and to strengthen the professional capacities of the Institute for Labour and Family Research in the area of eliminating gender-based discrimination. The National Line for Women Surviving Violence provided 24-hour crisis support.
5. The recently adopted National Action Plan for Women's Employment (2022–2030) was designed to reduce inequalities between women and men, to enhance women's economic independence and status, to promote the reconciliation of family and work life, to improve educational opportunities for women and to increase their skills. It also responded to the impact on women of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and to the situation created by the war in Ukraine and the subsequent influx of refugees. The Labour Code had been amended with a view to protecting employees from adverse or unequal treatment. They were entitled to file complaints against their employers, who were required to respond and were prevented from punishing employees for filing such complaints.
6. In the area of social affairs, mothers and families had access to a new pregnancy allowance. Pregnancy stipends were also provided to pregnant adult secondary-school and university students. Since 1 November 2022, fathers had been entitled to paid paternity leave of two weeks during the period of six weeks following the birth of a child. An amendment to the Act on Social Insurance had introduced a parental pension, in order to mitigate the difference in pensions granted to women with and without children. Women had been supported during the COVID-19 pandemic by a one-time allowance of €100 for children under the age of 18 years, and a one-time allowance of €333 for families in need. Nursing and sick pay had also been adjusted, particularly during the closure of schools and preschools. In 2022, the Government had approved a draft regulation increasing the capacity to provide care for children under the age of 3 years by 10 per cent by expanding the capacities of nursery schools and enabling grouped childcare to be offered. The Ministry of Education,

Science, Research and Sport had requested funds for a mechanism aimed at increasing the capacities of nursery schools, and the founders of nursery schools had been entitled, since 24 August 2022, to apply for financing of capacity-building projects.

7. With the aim of promoting gender equality in the workplace, a national project was developing conceptual, methodological and analytical material that would provide practical advice on the creation of non-discriminatory conditions, particularly for employees with caregiving and parental responsibilities.

8. The Government had adopted a resolution in November 2021 containing an apology to women who had been subjected to sterilization in violation of the law during the period from 1966 to 2004. A bill regulating the terms under which the State would provide a compensatory sum of €5,000 to victims had been submitted to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in April 2023.

9. With a view to ensuring access to justice and enhancing the credibility and performance of the judiciary, individual court districts were being enlarged, and new causal jurisdiction and administrative courts were being established. The new court administration system should enable more extensive digitization of the judiciary, improve transparency and provide better court statistics. The Ministry of Justice had submitted proposals in 2023 for two laws aimed at enhancing the legal situation of unmarried couples in areas such as inheritance, health care, labour law, the protection of minors and property-related issues.

10. The Government was implementing the Strategy on an Inclusive Approach in Education and Training and its first action plan (2022–2024). The Strategy could be modified and supplemented, based on the results of the implementation monitoring process. The goals of the action plan included desegregation in education and training, elimination of barriers in the school environment, training of teaching and professional staff, and prevention of stigmatization. Pursuant to an amendment to the Education Act, pre-primary education in nursery schools had been mandatory since 1 January 2021 for children who had reached the age of 5 years by 31 August of a given year. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport had submitted a bill concerning the introduction of support measures for children with special educational needs.

11. The Strategy on Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma by 2030 had been adopted. Steps were being taken to prevent the segregation of pupils from marginalized Roma communities and to place them in mixed classes. Projects being implemented with European Union structural funds included one focused on supporting marginalized Roma communities, a national field social work project covering all areas of Roma inclusion, including debt relief; and national projects on support for land settlement and pre-primary education.

12. The National Programme to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (2019–2023) was being implemented, and the Ministry of the Interior was providing support and protection for victims of trafficking in persons through the Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and for Crime Prevention. In 2022, the Ministry had concluded contracts with NGOs to secure the operation of the national helpline for victims of human trafficking, provide pre-return assistance and assisted voluntary return for victims, and give ongoing support to enable victims to return to normal life, to be integrated into society, to access the labour market, and to raise and educate children.

13. There had been no changes in the legal regulation of abortion. The Committee's recommendation concerning the adoption of a comprehensive programme on sexual and reproductive health and rights had not been implemented; although the professional associations of the country's physicians had reached a consensus on the Committee's proposed amendments, members of the parliament had repeatedly sought to make the legal regulation of abortion more restrictive.

14. The Healthy Regions organization run by the Ministry of Health implemented temporary compensatory measures aimed at improving the health situation of socially excluded groups. For instance, one national project being implemented was designed to improve the availability of regular health services for members of marginalized Roma communities.

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15. **Ms. Leinarte** said that the Anti-Discrimination Act was regarded by regional and international legal experts as a progressive and comprehensive piece of legislation, which promoted the principle of equal treatment in a variety of areas, such as employment, social security, health care, housing and education. However, the Act had not yet been fully enforced in the everyday life of Slovak women. She would therefore welcome information regarding women's legal capacity to address discrimination by filing complaints with the courts, and about any pending court cases concerning gender discrimination in public or private life. She wished to know whether women had access to free legal aid and whether the judiciary was fully aware of the provisions of the Convention.

16. While the State party had adopted major anti-discrimination laws some years ahead of many other countries in the region, there had recently been attempts to amend or restrict the implementation of progressive gender equality legislation, for instance concerning gender recognition and access to legal abortions. The State party had also refused to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. She was therefore interested in hearing about the ideological and social climate that undermined the principles of gender equality. She also wished to know whether members of parliament were fully aware of the provisions of the Convention.

17. **Ms. Bethel**, commending the adoption of the State party's first National Action Plan (2021–2025) for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), said that she wished to know whether civil society organizations had participated in its elaboration and whether a budget had been allocated for its implementation. She also wished to hear about the procedures for its implementation, monitoring and assessment, including by the Committee on Gender Equality, and about the specific responsibilities of different ministries.

18. The Committee commended the adoption by the State party of legislation concerning the situation in Ukraine, including the Act on Asylum and the Act on Residence of Foreigners. She would appreciate information on the implementation of those laws, particularly on behalf of women, who reportedly represented 86 per cent of Ukrainian refugees, and on the State party's response to their needs for nutrition, childcare facilities and employment.

19. Noting that a second national action plan was envisaged for the period from 2026 to 2030, she asked what was its proposed focus and whether civil society organizations would be involved in its elaboration and implementation.

20. **A representative of Slovakia** said that all persons were equal under the Constitution. All international treaties ratified by Slovakia that prohibited discrimination or guaranteed equal treatment, including the Convention, had precedence over national law. International human rights treaties were applicable in the event of gaps in national legislation. The Government recognized that the Anti-Discrimination Act, most recently amended in 2016, was perceived to be highly sensitive. However, it was preparing a further amendment to the Act, which was due to be introduced by the end of 2023. A round-table discussion with NGOs and the national human rights institution would be organized as part of those preparations. The amendment would seek to remedy shortcomings, such as lengthy procedures, lack of financial compensation and the award of insufficient compensation in discrimination cases.

21. Women had access to free legal aid. They could be represented by a lawyer of their choosing, by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights or by certain NGOs. The Convention had been cited by the courts in a small number of decisions, which related to domestic violence and the segregation of Roma children.

22. **A representative of Slovakia** said that many people were unaware of the existence of discrimination in health care or how to complain if they were discriminated against. The State-subsidized organization Healthy Regions was working with the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights on new materials to raise public awareness about discrimination in health care and available remedies.

23. Regarding the restriction of abortion, the law was currently balanced in favour of the right to life of the unborn child – a situation that reflected the religious views of majority of

the population and the political influence of the Catholic Church. Similar ideological motivations were behind efforts to restrict access to legal gender recognition.

24. **A representative of Slovakia** said that the Istanbul Convention applied customary terminology related to equality between women and men; it had not introduced any terms that did not already exist in Slovak legislation. Similar terminology could be found in European Union Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. Although the National Council of the Slovak Republic had in March 2019 adopted a resolution rejecting the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, the Government considered that ratification of the Convention was not essential for the elimination of violence against women and domestic violence.

25. **Mr. Matulay** (Slovakia) said that Slovakia had been directly affected by the war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, in the sense that it had received large numbers of Ukrainian refugees, most of whom were vulnerable women, children and older persons.

26. **A representative of Slovakia** said that the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport had responded to the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine by taking measures for the integration of children in schools and for the support of traumatized persons. It had launched a dedicated website on which Ukrainian parents could find information and ask questions about schools. Schools had been issued with guidance on inclusion. Professionals from the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology staffed a hotline that provided psychological assistance for parents, teachers and students. More than 10,000 Ukrainian children were currently enrolled in Slovak schools.

27. **A representative of Slovakia** said that the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family offered various programmes for the integration and support of displaced women. It had prepared a strategy for the comprehensive integration of Ukrainian refugees, with the aim of contributing to the long-term development of Slovakia. The strategy was based on the principles of solidarity and non-discrimination and envisaged cooperation with all stakeholders, recognizing that refugees' quality of life was closely connected with their access to employment, housing, education, health and social services, and justice.

28. Services were provided to vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied children, older persons, victims of trafficking and exploitation, and persons with disabilities. The National Line for Women Surviving Violence provided assistance in the Ukrainian language. The Ministry cooperated with local governments and NGOs, recognizing that they played a key role in fostering social inclusion, cohesion and integration.

29. **Mr. Matulay** (Slovakia) said that his delegation would provide detailed information in writing regarding the National Action Plan on women and peace and security.

30. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen**, speaking as Chair of the Working Group on Communications, said that, at its sixty-fifth session, the Committee had adopted Views on communication No. 66/2014, *D.S. v. Slovakia* ([CEDAW/C/65/D/66/2014](#)), in which it had concluded that the State party had violated the author's rights under the Convention. The Committee had recommended that the author of the communication should be provided with monetary compensation equivalent to the loss of income since the date on which the author's employment had been terminated as a result of an unjustified procedure; compensation for the moral damages suffered during the process of her dismissal; and compensation for legal costs and expenses. The State party had subsequently informed the Committee that, while it intended to implement most of the Committee's recommendations, it did not agree with the recommendation on compensation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had published the Committee's decision, with a translation into Slovak, on its website and had disseminated it to all concerned government officials and institutions. The author had requested the Committee to continue its dialogue with the State party to ensure full implementation of the decision. In November 2021, members of the Committee's Working Group on Communications had met with the State party's officials to discuss follow-up of the case. She wished to know whether the State party would provide the Committee with new information on the case with a view to closing the dialogue.

31. **Ms. Mikko** said that, as that some Ukrainian women had reportedly been raped by Russian soldiers, she wished to know to what extent Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia had access to medical services, including abortion.

32. **A representative of Slovakia** said that the Permanent Mission of Slovakia had duly transmitted information on its discussions with the Committee regarding the communication *D.S. v. Slovakia* to the relevant ministries.

33. **A representative of Slovakia** said that the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family did not have competence to award compensation on the basis of decisions taken by United Nations committees or other international institutions. However, in 2022, amendments had been introduced to the Labour Code that increased employees' protection from adverse treatment. Under article 13 of the Code, employees had the right to submit complaints to their employers in connection with violations of the principle of equal treatment or of rights and obligations arising from the employment relationship. Employers were obliged to respond to such complaints in writing without undue delay, to correct and refrain from the conduct in question, and to eliminate the consequences thereof. The persecution or punishment of employees for filing complaints, either against the employer or against another employee, was prohibited. Furthermore, the reversal of the burden of proof improved the position of employees who wished to assert their rights before the courts. The Government believed that the amendments should prevent cases similar to communication No. 66/2014.

34. **A representative of Slovakia** said that the Ministry of Justice had considered the award of financial compensation to the author of the communication under the Liability Act. Discussions in that regard were still ongoing at the ministerial level.

35. **A representative of Slovakia** said that Slovakia guaranteed access to health care for refugees from Ukraine. At the height of the refugee crisis, special health centres had been established to ensure that refugees had prompt access. Ukrainian women had access to abortion under the same conditions as Slovak women. Public health insurance covered abortions for women who became pregnant as a result of crimes committed against them. Such cases were considered urgent medical care, to which Ukrainian women were entitled free of charge.

36. **Mr. Matulay** (Slovakia) said that some Ukrainian women might have witnessed war crimes and be traumatized. The Government was consulting NGOs and experts on how best to approach women in such cases, in order to collect evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

37. **Ms. Haidar** said that, according to the European Institute for Gender Equality, other European Union member States were outperforming Slovakia in the area of gender equality. She therefore wished to know what progress had been achieved so far under the State Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities (2021–2027) and its corresponding action plan, and whether the Strategy and action plan had effectively contributed to the inclusion of a gender perspective in the policies and programmes of the State party. She wondered whether they addressed discrimination on the basis of sex, as well as intersectional discrimination. She would be interested to know whether representatives of NGOs and civil society had been involved in the development and implementation of the action plan, and whether a specific budget had been set aside for its implementation. How did the State party ensure that financial resources were allocated to women's rights organizations and NGOs that defended the rights of lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons? How could NGOs get access to funding from the Department of Horizontal Principles?

38. Noting that the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights was currently accredited with B status under the Paris Principles, she asked whether the State party would consider introducing new legislation to strengthen the Centre's mandate, ensure its full compliance with the Paris Principles, give it clear powers to promote and protect human rights, and enhance the procedures for the selection and appointment of its leadership.

39. **Ms. Akizuki** said that the Committee welcomed the project to support the pre-primary education of children from marginalized Roma communities and the "You have a chance

too!” project, both of which consisted in temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of Roma women’s de facto or substantive equality. She wished to know what had been the outcomes of those projects, how they had redressed discrimination against Roma women, and how the Government had evaluated their impact.

40. A third project, entitled “Family and work”, in her view did not consist in temporary special measures but was in fact a general social policy aimed at improving the situation of women; it should therefore be considered under article 11 of the Convention.

41. In the *Global Gender Gap Report 2022* of the World Economic Forum, the State party had obtained a relatively low score in the area of women’s economic participation and opportunity, and a very low score for women’s political empowerment. She therefore wished to know whether the Government planned to introduce temporary special measures to increase female representation in the legislature to at least 30 per cent, to close the gender pay gap and to increase the proportion of women in decision-making positions. Information on any other plans to adopt temporary special measures in areas in which women were underrepresented or disadvantaged, in particular measures in favour of Roma women, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons, and women with disabilities, would be welcome.

42. **A representative of Slovakia** said that the Department of Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family coordinated and implemented policies in that area. It also supervised the implementation of the Anti-Discrimination Act and cooperated with other ministries to apply the principle of equal treatment. It adopted temporary special measures under the Act and developed, evaluated and updated legislation and strategies on gender equality, violence against women, domestic violence, equal opportunities and discrimination. The Department had worked with other ministries, the Gender Equality Committee and civil society to develop the State Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities (2021–2027).

43. The action plan to implement the Strategy identified problems in each strategic area and set 83 specific actions to resolve them. Implementation of the action plan would be evaluated for the first time in November 2023. Action plans for preventing and eliminating violence against women and for the employment of women had also been developed under the Strategy. Most of the activities related to the Strategy were paid for using the national budget or European Union funding. The Gender Equality Committee had established working groups on the elimination of violence against women and children, women’s sexual and reproductive rights, and gender equality in the labour market. That Committee had members drawn from NGOs, government ministries and other national or regional stakeholders.

44. **A representative of Slovakia** said that grants and early interventions were available to ensure equal educational opportunities and improve literacy levels among children under the age of 6 years, especially Roma children and those from low-income families. Work was being undertaken with families to prepare children for preschool education. Support was provided in the language spoken by Roma communities with a view to improving gender equality and literacy skills, promoting the equality of men and women in those communities, and helping women to return to work after the birth of a child.

45. **A representative of Slovakia** said that temporary special measures had been introduced to recruit Roma women as assistants and teachers in preschools. Legislation would soon be adopted guaranteeing a place in a preschool for all children over the age of 3 years. The Ministry of Education’s lifelong learning strategy helped to facilitate access to the labour market for persons who had dropped out of education.

46. **A representative of Slovakia** said that the Department of Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities operated a subsidy scheme to support the equal treatment of men and women, including by reducing the gender pay gap, supporting working parents, fighting poverty and preventing domestic violence. More than €100,000 had been awarded to NGOs in both 2021 and 2022. The Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization managed the funding for the programme to prevent domestic violence, for which €8.5 million had been allocated. The programme focused on providing services to

victims of domestic and gender-based violence. Counselling centres and safe houses had been opened for victims.

47. The National Action Plan for Women's Employment (2022–2030) included support for accessing the labour market and achieving a work-life balance. It also outlined educational activities aimed at eliminating stereotypes about women, as well as actions for jobseekers from at-risk groups, including refugees.

48. **A representative of Slovakia** said that comprehensive reform of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights would be undertaken in line with European Union legislation on equality bodies that was expected to be adopted in June 2023 and the Paris Principles. The Centre's rules of procedure, which had entered into force in May 2022, stated that candidates for its executive directorship must make a public presentation. The budget and human resources of the Centre had been continuously increased.

49. **Ms. Haidar** said that she would like to know how the State party would ensure that civil society organizations were involved in the implementation of the State Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities (2021–2027) and how the Strategy would address the intersectionality of discrimination, taking into account the fact that women played many roles, not just in a family setting.

50. **Mr. Safarov** said that he would be interested to learn how the State party was combating stereotypes and sexism, especially on social media, and implementing Council of Europe campaigns against hate speech. It would be useful to know whether there were any monitoring procedures or penalties in place for the promotion of gender stereotypes in the media. The delegation was invited to outline any plans to regulate the online space with a view to eliminating sexist content. He would like to learn more about measures being taken by the Government to prevent hate speech and sexism in the community.

51. Further information would be welcome regarding how the State party was preventing domestic violence, intimate partner violence and femicide. He would be interested to learn whether any improvements had been made to the law enforcement processes for identifying and registering cases of domestic violence. He wondered how victims of domestic violence were protected in child custody procedures involving the perpetrator.

52. He would appreciate an explanation of the delay in compensating Roma and other women for the forced sterilization practised upon them. The delegation was invited to indicate whether there was a time limit for cases of domestic violence to be considered by the courts, and whether there were any special legal protections for victims of sexual and domestic violence. It would be useful to know whether the State party planned to bring its legal definition of domestic violence into line with international standards.

53. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that she would be interested to learn what measures the State party planned to take to train members of the judiciary in laws concerning trafficking in persons and whether it might consider appointing specialized judges. She would like to know if any progress had been made in the amendment to the legislation that would impose more severe penalties for trafficking in persons and for knowingly buying sex from a victim of trafficking. She wondered how the State party had followed up on the recommendation from the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings that the offence of trafficking should be excluded from the plea bargain procedure.

54. In the light of reports that police officers did not take trafficking crimes or their victims seriously, she invited the delegation to indicate whether there were any training programmes aimed at creating a safe environment for victims to lodge complaints or a special police unit for addressing trafficking cases. She wished to know whether the new national action plan on trafficking would introduce special investigation techniques, so that investigations did not have to rely on testimonies alone. It would be useful to learn whether the non-punishment provision in Slovak law would be extended to administrative and immigration offences, and whether guidance would be issued to police and prosecutors.

55. The State party had received recommendations from the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings to improve access to justice for victims of trafficking and better protect victims during court proceedings. She would like to know if those

recommendations had been implemented. The delegation was invited to indicate whether cases of forced marriage of young Roma girls were considered to be trafficking cases and whether they were prosecuted as such. Was there a structure in place to identify victims of trafficking among sex workers?

56. **A representative of Slovakia** said that, while amendment of the Criminal Code was ongoing, the proposal to include a definition of rape had been removed. The recommendations of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings concerning excluding trafficking from the plea bargain procedure had been discussed, but the legislative branch had not wanted to impose different conditions for different crimes. It was difficult to appoint specialized judges for trafficking cases because the district-level courts were very small. Penalties for violating the rights of children had been made more severe and, if convicted, perpetrators could no longer receive probation as a punishment. Judges and other court officials were trained at the Judiciary Academy, where one of the topics covered was human trafficking.

57. A relationship between the victim and the perpetrator was considered to be an aggravating circumstance in cases of violence. Data on the number of persons convicted of violent crimes and the relationship of perpetrators to victims would be submitted in writing. While there was no definition of domestic violence in the Criminal Code, a definition was included in the Victims of Crime Act. Domestic violence was understood to involve violence, or the threat thereof, against any direct relative, adoptive family member, a romantic partner or any other member of the perpetrator's household. Anyone who claimed to be a victim of domestic violence was regarded as such, irrespective of whether criminal proceedings had been launched.

58. In accordance with the Victims of Crime Act, victims of domestic or gender-based violence who were children, elderly or had a disability and victims of hate crimes and crimes against human dignity, including rape and sexual violence, were considered to be particularly vulnerable and were therefore entitled to special protection, as laid down in the Code of Criminal Procedure, with a view to preventing secondary and repeated victimization. Those protections included the right to be interviewed by a person of the victim's chosen sex and the right to be notified when the perpetrator was released from detention or imprisonment. In addition, vulnerable victims were to be interviewed only where absolutely necessary and were never to be subjected to confrontational interview techniques. Victims were entitled to legal aid and a court-appointed attorney during criminal proceedings, or they could choose to be represented in court by an accredited victim support organization. Victims of domestic violence could make a criminal complaint at any police station, prosecutor's office or court, and the police were obliged to investigate all complaints.

59. The Ministry of Justice ran a programme for the accreditation of victim support organizations. Such organizations offered a range of services, including legal support, counselling, health care, crisis intervention and coordination of emergency housing. Victims were entitled to receive free support for at least 20 days. There were 20 accredited victim support organizations in Slovakia, which were eligible for annual grants from a Ministry of Justice scheme that had an annual budget of €250,000.

60. In July 2021, an amendment to the Victims of Crime Act had come into force, which provided for the creation of intervention centres for victims of domestic violence. Such centres had an obligation to contact victims within 72 hours of being informed by the police that a violent person had been expelled from a shared household. They cooperated with other organizations to provide victims with crisis intervention and risk assessment services, in addition to psychosocial support and legal assistance, especially with regard to obtaining injunctions. Ten such centres had been established thus far, with at least one in every region of the country, and they received grants from the Ministry of Justice from a total annual budget of €1.6 million. The State Secretary for Justice and other members of the Ministry of Justice conducted visits to all regions of Slovakia to help promote communication between police, intervention centres, prosecutors and judges.

61. Victims of domestic violence could request protection orders to prohibit the violent person from contacting or approaching them or from entering a dwelling, regardless of the violent person's ownership or rental rights over the property. Protection orders were issued

by a court within 24 hours of receipt of the request. They were not time-limited and could be amended. A data-collection study on the use of protection orders was currently ongoing, the results of which would be published in April 2024. Victims of violent crimes could claim compensation from both the State and the offender for harm to health and for non-pecuniary damages.

62. Following the terrorist attack outside a well-known gay bar in Bratislava in October 2022, a round table had been held to identify the root causes. While the initial draft of the proposed amendment to the Criminal Code has included provisions prohibiting hate speech on the grounds of gender identity, those provisions had been removed from the draft that was currently under consideration by the legislature. Online hate speech was prohibited under the new Media Act, however.

63. **A representative of Slovakia** said that the Government had adopted a national action plan for the protection of children in the digital environment for 2022–2023. The focus of the plan was to address threats while also highlighting opportunities, by presenting a positive view of the digital environment, developing children’s critical thinking and educating parents on the use of digital spaces.

64. **A representative of Slovakia** said that the Gender Equality Department of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family had conducted an assessment of the previous national action plan on combating violence against women, on the basis of which it had drawn up a new national action plan. The Coordinating Methodological Centre for Combating Gender-Based and Domestic Violence, which was part of the Institute for Labour and Family Research, was responsible for coordinating the implementation of national policy in that area. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry had ensured that the crisis hotline for victims of domestic violence was advertised prominently on national news programmes, which had led to an increase in calls received. To support migrant and refugee women who experienced violence in Slovakia, the Centre monitored vacancies and capacities at shelters and crisis centres and shared that information with service providers to facilitate the placement of victims. The Centre also gathered administrative data on offences of violence against women and domestic violence from the police and justice sectors in order to monitor investigation and prosecution rates. The Centre included eight regional coordination teams, which had developed regional action plans for combating violence against women. Activities included training and awareness-raising and were targeted at children, families and employees of intervention centres.

65. **A representative of Slovakia** said that the Government was aware that forced marriage was a traditional cultural practice in certain Roma communities. The Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities had worked with the Ministry of the Interior to produce a leaflet which explained that forced marriage was a crime and which described how to identify and report victims and where to access support services. The leaflet was available in the Slovak and Romani languages and in physical and digital formats.

66. Training on combating human trafficking was being developed for employees of the Office, with a view to improving victim detection and support. The Office also worked with the Ministry of the Interior to provide training on combating human trafficking for local civil order service providers, and it had partnered with the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights to provide training to combat anti-Roma racism among judges, lawyers and prosecutors. In September 2022, the National Council of the Slovak Republic had adopted a legal definition of anti-Roma racism and had requested the Government to reform the relevant legislation accordingly and to cultivate public and political debate on the topic. Anti-Roma racism was also covered in the national strategy on combating radicalization and extremism by 2024, which included actions to monitor online hate speech.

67. **Mr. Safarov** asked when the State party intended to adopt regulations on identifying and supporting asylum-seekers and refugees who were victims of domestic violence.

68. **Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen** said that she wished to know whether child marriage of Roma girls was prosecuted as an offence of trafficking in persons. She would also welcome data on the compensation awarded to victims in cases of trafficking in persons over the preceding five years.

69. **A representative of Slovakia** said that, once the draft directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence had been approved and adopted, the Government would transpose its provisions into domestic law. The directive would include provisions on penalties, prevention and protection measures, and access to justice.

70. **A representative of Slovakia** said that, between 2017 and 2023, the National Unit for Combating Illegal Migration had investigated more than 15 cases of trafficking in persons with the aim of concluding a forced marriage. Most of the cases had been reported by the victim's teacher, social worker or parents or by the victims themselves. Only one perpetrator had received a criminal sentence, namely a 2-year prison term followed by 3 years of probation. The remaining investigations had either been stopped or had been the subject of a complaint.

Articles 7–9

71. **Ms. Mikko** said that, as general elections were scheduled for 2024, she would like to know what legislative and non-legislative measures had been taken to ensure a dramatic increase in women's representation in Parliament. Following the adoption of Directive (EU) 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures, it would also be interesting to learn how many State-owned enterprises complied with the target for female representation on corporate boards, whether any plans had been adopted to ensure that the targets set out in the directive were met, and when the State party expected to achieve gender parity in its diplomatic service.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.