



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 3203rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 16 April 2026, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Kut

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

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

Twenty-fifth periodic report of Cyprus (CERD/C/CYP/25; CERD/C/CYP/Q/25)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Cyprus joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Cyprus** said that, during the reporting period, important progress had been achieved in combating racial discrimination, in particular through the enactment of legislation and the development of national action plans and policies. During its presidency of the Council of the European Union between January and June 2026, Cyprus had established the protection and promotion of the rights and freedoms of all people, without discrimination, as one of its main priorities.
3. Regrettably, the continuing occupation by Turkish military forces of 36.2% of the territory of Cyprus meant that the Government of the Republic of Cyprus was not in a position to exercise effective control over the occupied areas and, consequently, was unable to ensure the application of the Convention in those areas or to apply its anti-racism laws, policies and programmes to people living in those areas. There were therefore no reliable data available regarding the enjoyment of Convention rights by the population living in the occupied areas. All information and data presented during the dialogue pertained solely to the areas that were under the Government's control.
4. Under the Constitution, two communities resided on the island of Cyprus, namely the Greek Cypriot community and the Turkish Cypriot community. In addition, the Armenian, Latin and Maronite communities, as national minorities, had been granted rights under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.
5. Since the submission of the periodic report, progress had been made on a number of legislative measures, including the introduction of amendments to the Criminal Code, the Rights of Persons who are Arrested and Detained Law, the Law on establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime and the Legal Aid Law, the enactment of the Prevention and Handling of School Violence Law and the drafting of new legislation on refugees, which was due to be promulgated later in 2026. The Radio and Television Broadcasters Law had been amended to include prohibitions on discrimination, incitement to hatred or violence and the use of offensive language, and legislation had been enacted to comply with the Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online of the European Commission. Judicial reforms included the establishment of the International Protection Administrative Court. Furthermore, the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman), as the national human rights institution, had been granted category A status in October 2022.
6. Asylum-seekers were now permitted to enter the labour market nine months after the submission of their application for international protection. The Social Welfare Services provided support to unaccompanied minors and paid a monthly allowance to any asylum-seekers who could not be accommodated at a reception centre. The National Roma Strategic Framework had been submitted to the European Commission in December 2021.
7. Following the launch of the general healthcare system in June 2019, foreign nationals residing in the areas controlled by the Republic of Cyprus were entitled to healthcare on an equal footing with Cypriot nationals, without discrimination. Cyprus Police took a comprehensive approach to combating racial discrimination and had instituted a number of reforms, including through training and capacity-strengthening initiatives and improvements to detention standards. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth had implemented a strategic plan aimed at raising awareness of racism and intolerance and promoting equality and respect.
8. **Ms. Shepherd** (Country Rapporteur) said that she wished to receive more information on the ethnic composition of the State Party's population and on the enjoyment of economic and social rights by all ethnic groups, with a particular focus on any changes that had occurred since the most recent census had been conducted in 2021.

9. **Mr. Sibande** (Country Task Force) said that he would be interested to hear more details of the legal and policy framework aimed at the Roma community, people of African descent and black Europeans.

10. In the light of reports received by the Committee that the authorities did not regard anti-discrimination issues as a priority, he would welcome an update on the incorporation of the Convention into domestic law, with a particular focus on article 1. He also wished to know how the courts in the State Party applied the Convention.

11. While the Committee understood that the Government had no effective control over certain parts of its territory, it would nevertheless appreciate receiving details of the application of the Convention across the territory in its entirety.

12. The delegation might comment on reports that hate crimes were not recorded separately from other crimes and on any plans to ensure that cases of hate crime were properly recorded and prosecuted; that hate speech laws were consistently applied, including in respect of government officials and religious leaders; that the Office of the Ombudsman was granted the authority to initiate or participate in court proceedings on behalf of victims; and that victims were not deterred from reporting hate crimes because of limited access to legal aid.

13. The Committee had received information indicating that the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community continued to face marginalization and, in some cases, harassment by the authorities. It would therefore like to receive details of any steps that were being taken to protect that community and of how the relevant provisions of the Law on Combating Certain Forms and Expressions of Racism and Xenophobia by Means of Criminal Law were used to address homophobia and promote the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons.

14. Lastly, he wished to know what training was provided on issues of discrimination and on the Convention and relevant legislation to police officers, judges, lawyers, public officials and other persons in positions of authority.

15. **A representative of Cyprus** said that Greek Cypriots constituted around 80% of the population, while Turkish Cypriots accounted for around 18%. Approximately 93,540 people resident in Cyprus were citizens of other countries of the European Union, notably Greece, and 107,168 were from countries outside the European Union. There were currently 15,196 people seeking asylum and 17,408 people benefiting from international protection.

16. Each religious group elected representatives to the parliament, and religious communities were adequately represented in all departments and at all hierarchical levels within the public sector. Entrance examinations for the civil service and the judiciary were open to all citizens of Cyprus who met the relevant criteria. Entrance examinations for the foreign service were available in Turkish.

17. **A representative of Cyprus** said that, under the Constitution, Roma persons were considered to be members of the Turkish Cypriot community and enjoyed the same rights as other citizens of Cyprus. The National Roma Strategic Framework set out national goals and measures designed to enhance equality, inclusion and participation for Roma persons living in the areas that were under the effective control of the Government. According to the 2021 census, there were 243 Roma individuals living in those areas.

18. **A representative of Cyprus** said that his Government was fully committed to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the full implementation of the Convention. Under the European Union Anti-Racism Strategy, the Government would make adequate resources available to strengthen the implementation and enforcement of existing anti-discrimination laws, step up protection from hate crimes and hate speech, foster inclusion in education, employment, healthcare and housing and build anti-racism partnerships at all levels of society.

19. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the obligations set out in the Convention were reflected in national legislation. The principles of equality and non-discrimination, including on grounds of race, skin colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, were enshrined in the Constitution, and hate crimes and hate speech were explicitly prohibited in the Criminal Code and the Law on Combating Certain Forms and Expressions of Racism and Xenophobia by Means of Criminal Law.

20. The Government continued to take legislative steps to address intersectional discrimination and create an inclusive society for everyone, including by amending the legislation governing victims' rights with a view to implementing relevant European Union directives, providing greater safeguards for victims and ensuring better protection from revictimization, intimidation and retaliation. Under the amendments, all relevant authorities must adopt a code of practice designed to uphold victims' rights and must provide targeted training for professionals likely to come into contact with victims. In addition, provisions had been introduced to allow family members to exercise victims' rights on their behalf if they became incapable of doing so themselves.

21. The Legal Aid Law had been amended in 2024 to bring it into line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. In particular, the amendments had introduced specific provisions for free legal aid for women who suffered abuse or domestic violence. The Rights of Persons who are Arrested and Detained Law had also been amended to strengthen detainees' right to correspond in writing, including with the Independent Authority for the Investigation of Allegations and Complaints against the Police.

22. With regard to the judiciary, major structural reforms had been undertaken with the aim of enhancing procedural safeguards and the specialization of courts and judges, improving efficiency and strengthening protection against racial discrimination. The impact of the reforms would be assessed in the coming years, with a particular focus on the effects of the establishment, in January 2026, of the new Administrative Court of Appeal.

23. In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court had found that the perpetrator's racist motivation should have been taken into consideration in a case that had been brought before a district court. The Supreme Court had overturned the fine of €750 imposed by the lower court and instead handed down a sentence of 3 months' imprisonment.

24. The first National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights had been adopted in 2021. The core pillars of the Strategy, which explicitly covered migrants, stateless persons, refugees and asylum-seekers, were the protection of and respect for human rights, the promotion of human rights and the prevention of abuse.

25. **A representative of Cyprus** said that Cyprus Police had set up an office responsible for handling human rights and anti-discrimination issues and maintaining statistical data on complaints and investigations relating to racially motivated offences. The Police had also designated, in each division, two liaison officers for discrimination-related matters. The officers coordinated and supervised the investigation of complaints of discrimination or hate crimes.

26. In addition, Cyprus Police had issued instructions regulating matters that fell within the framework of preventing and combating racism and discrimination, circulated a communication emphasizing the prohibition on stopping, searching or detaining a person solely on the basis of ethnic origin or other personal characteristics and distributed a manual on discrimination and other human rights-related matters. It also recorded and published statistics on racism-related offences and had introduced a training programme designed to improve the police response to discrimination-related offences; 400 police officers had already completed the training. Community police officers were tasked with developing trust and cooperation with representatives of minority communities, including through the organization of cultural events.

27. Between 2005 and 2024, 462 discrimination cases had been reported, 158 of which had gone to trial, with another 40 pending. Convictions had been handed down in 81 cases. Hate crimes and related offences were investigated by the relevant police station or by the

criminal investigations department, depending on their seriousness, under the supervision of a discrimination liaison officer. A questionnaire was used to determine whether any racist motive was involved in a given incident.

28. The human rights office and the Cyprus Police Academy organized training for police officers. Since 2016, an annual conference had been organized on respect for human rights, and seminars had been held on topics related to respect for diversity, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community and persons with disabilities.

29. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the Criminal Code had been amended to ban so-called conversion therapy aimed at lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and to increase the penalties for incitement to violence or hatred on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. A national strategy for the protection and promotion of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons was being prepared.

30. **Mr. Sibande** said that the delegation might provide more information on how, beyond the case that had come before the Supreme Court, the judiciary made use of the Convention at the domestic level.

31. He would like to know more about how the legal framework on discrimination, including in the areas of employment, education and healthcare, had been strengthened and about how article 1 of the Convention had been incorporated into the State Party's legislation. He would be interested to learn how the authorities planned to ensure that the Equal Treatment (Racial or Ethnic Origin) Law was broad enough to cover all areas of public life. It would be useful to hear about any training on racial discrimination and hate crimes that was offered to justice officials, as well as any training on unconscious bias that was delivered to staff of government agencies. The delegation might explain whether there were plans to establish an independent oversight mechanism to monitor the use of discriminatory practices such as racial profiling.

32. He wished to know whether the State Party planned to accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, to establish a procedure for the determination of statelessness and to conduct a review of any legislative provisions that restricted children's access to Cypriot nationality on the basis of the manner in which their parents had entered the country.

33. The Committee had received reports of racist comments made by private individuals and public figures. He would be particularly interested to receive details of the investigation that had been conducted into racially motivated comments made by players and fans of the opposing team and directed at a footballer of Beninese origin who played for a team based in Nicosia.

34. In the light of reports that police records did not accurately reflect the extent of racially motivated crimes, he wished to receive more data on racist offences dealt with by law enforcement agencies and the courts. He also wished to know what efforts were being made to ensure that the office responsible for handling human rights and anti-discrimination issues was adequately staffed.

35. **Ms. Tlakula** (Follow-up Rapporteur), welcoming the information provided by the State Party in follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations on its combined twenty-third and twenty-fourth periodic reports ([CERD/C/CYP/CO/23-24/Add.1](#)), said that the Committee would be grateful if the delegation could furnish information on any efforts to reduce the high rate of hate crimes, in particular those motivated by national or ethnic origin, together with statistical data from 2017 onward relating to such crimes.

36. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that she wished to know how different types of discriminatory acts and behaviour, including any that did not meet the threshold for a criminal offence, were addressed by the authorities and how victims' access to remedies was facilitated. It would be interesting to hear more about how complaints of racial discrimination were assessed and classified.

37. **A representative of Cyprus** said that Cyprus Police organized around five training activities, including seminars and conferences, each year.

38. The number of complaints of hate crimes and discrimination-related offences had risen, reflecting growing confidence in police procedures. All complaints, including those made anonymously, were treated with the utmost seriousness and investigated thoroughly. If sufficient evidence was gathered to build a case, the files were referred to the Office of the Attorney General, which was responsible for deciding whether to proceed to trial. As had already been mentioned, 81 cases had resulted in convictions, a significant number for a small country like Cyprus.

39. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the landmark ruling in the racial discrimination case that had gone before the Supreme Court had created a legal precedent that could then be reflected in subsequent cases, as had already happened in a case before the Court of Appeal.

40. The Cyprus Judicial Training School, which had been established in 2020, provided training programmes and seminars for judges that covered non-discrimination based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin. The School had developed a wide cooperation network with several international organizations and institutions. The Cyprus Bar Association had a training centre that organized training on different areas of law, including human rights law and migration law. Practising lawyers were required to complete continuing professional development seminars in order to renew their licences and, in recent years, those seminars had addressed the compliance of Cyprus with international human rights conventions and refugee and migration issues. The Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus had established an in-house training academy in 2022 that provided initial and in-service training for its staff, including activities promoting the rights enshrined in the Convention and other human rights.

41. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the Cyprus Police Academy provided education on human rights, racial discrimination, xenophobia and racism at all levels of police training. Human rights were mainstreamed in police recruit training and specialized training programmes, including those on criminal investigation, community policing, the handling of detainees and border control. Topics included communication in a multicultural society; enforcement of human rights; human rights and police ethics; prohibition of torture; investigation of offences related to race, discrimination and racist behaviour; combating xenophobia and racism; and trafficking in human beings.

42. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the Refugee Law required relevant officials to receive adequate training on asylum. The European Union Agency for Asylum provided training for asylum officers and personnel recruited to work at the Pournara reception centre. Staff members of reception centres, including social workers, reception officers, registration officers and police received regular training on specific issues such as vulnerability identification.

43. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the general healthcare system launched in 2019 ensured equitable and non-discriminatory access to healthcare services. The system provided comprehensive coverage to all eligible residents, including third country nationals, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection under the same conditions as citizens. A number of targeted measures had been introduced to address inequalities in access to healthcare. Asylum-seekers were granted access to free public healthcare services outside the general healthcare system during the examination of their applications. Emergency healthcare services were also available to all persons without discrimination.

44. **A representative of Cyprus** said that most stateless persons in Cyprus were asylum-seekers of Palestinian origin. The Government examined their applications and granted most of them international protection. Residence permits had been issued to 19 persons concerned. The competent authorities were still considering whether Cyprus should accede to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

45. **A representative of Cyprus** said that she wished to clarify that only the Police Office for Combating Discrimination was understaffed. Criminal investigation departments and police stations were adequately staffed.

46. **A representative of Cyprus** said that, in its three-year strategic plan for the period 2026–2028, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth had set out priorities that included promoting unhindered access to quality education for all, including children with disabilities

and children with migrant backgrounds, promoting gender equality and combating school violence and discrimination. The education system had a responsibility to ensure that pupils were adequately prepared to identify, confront and respond to racial discrimination. The systematic integration of human rights education, intercultural competence and critical thinking in teaching, learning and school life was essential, as it allowed pupils to understand the detrimental impact of racism and gave them the knowledge, attitudes and skills to prevent and address discriminatory conduct in their communities.

47. In 2025, the Ministry had updated its anti-racism policy, known as the Code of Conduct against Racism and Guide for Managing and Recording Racist Incidents, which was compulsory for all primary and secondary schools. Since 2018, the Ministry had organized a school network to support the implementation of the policy, with the participation of about 30 schools, of all levels, each year. Teachers from participating schools received training on theoretical and practical aspects of the policy. Support was provided to the school network through a website and helpline and parents were sent leaflets containing information about the anti-racism policy in seven languages. Data for the previous three school years revealed that there had been 336 reported racist incidents in schools in 2022/23, 547 in 2023/24 and 694 in 2024/25. Those data suggested that more schools were implementing the policy and reporting incidents, thus addressing the issue of underreporting.

48. **A representative of Cyprus** said that ethnic minorities in Cyprus enjoyed equal access to the labour market. The Public Employment Service provided various services free of charge to all jobseekers, including Roma persons, Turkish Cypriots and asylum-seekers. The Public Employment Service actively prevented discriminatory practices in the advertising and filling of vacancies and systematically informed employers of their obligations under the applicable equality legislation.

The meeting was suspended at 4.40 p.m. and resumed at 4.50 p.m.

49. **Mr. Sibande** said that he was concerned that the work of many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in support of migrants and asylum-seekers had been put at risk by the introduction in 2017 of new registration rules, and that the Committee had had limited interactions with Cypriot NGOs during the preparations for the current dialogue. He would be interested to know exactly what requirements had been introduced and how the State Party ensured that NGOs were not hindered in their activities, especially in terms of raising public awareness of racial discrimination. The Committee would be grateful for additional information on the legal framework governing the work of NGOs that promoted and protected the rights of Turkish Cypriots, Roma, migrants and asylum-seekers.

50. The Committee had been informed that Cyprus was one of two European Union member States that had not adopted a national anti-racism action plan, in line with the European Union Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020–2025, and that, during a parliamentary inquiry attended by various authorities, multiple participants had pointed to the absence of a comprehensive national strategy against racism. He therefore wished to know whether the Government planned to adopt a national action plan and a national strategy against racism.

51. He also wished to know whether any other human rights institutions, besides the Ombudsman, received support from the State. It would also be useful to know whether the State Party planned to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to tackle racism more broadly, for instance, by granting it the competence to initiate or participate in court proceedings.

52. The Committee welcomed the information provided on the training of the police and the judiciary and would appreciate details concerning other individuals and public institutions that were being trained to deal with racism. It would also appreciate further information on how the Convention had been applied at different levels within the judiciary.

53. Furthermore, he would like to know whether the Office of the Ombudsman had sufficient staff to carry out its mandate. In the light of reports that the Ombudsman had received several complaints of online racist comments directed against foreigners, he wished to know what legal and policy instruments and programmes had been adopted to ensure that hate speech was properly recorded and monitored. How did the State Party monitor and combat racism in the media, including on television, social media and other online platforms?

54. **Ms. Shepherd** said that, in its previous concluding observations (CERD/C/CYP/CO/23-24), the Committee had expressed concern about racially motivated verbal abuse and physical attacks against persons of foreign origin. Despite some preventive measures, the Committee still received too many reports of violence and aggression against persons of foreign origin. She therefore wished to know what additional measures and monitoring and reporting mechanisms the State Party could put in place to alleviate or eradicate the problem. She would be glad to receive data on reported incidents of verbal abuse and aggression against persons of foreign origin since 2021, and on the outcomes of investigations or prosecutions.

55. She was particularly keen to know what progress the State Party had made in adopting comprehensive legislation on hate speech, in line with the Committee's previous recommendation. Hate speech affecting several groups remained widespread in Cypriot public discourse and instances of firm and prompt condemnation of racist and other hate speech by public figures remained sporadic. Given that the Code of Principle and Rules of Ethics and Transparency for Members of Parliament had entered into force in February 2021, she wished to know how effective it had been in preventing hate speech, incitement of violence and sexist or racist behaviour, and what punishments were imposed on parliamentarians who breached the Code.

56. Anti-black racism targeting migrants of African descent and black football players had reportedly become increasingly visible in recent years. Although the disciplinary rules of the Cyprus Football Association prohibited racist and intolerant behaviour by football players, clubs and fans and provided for fines and other sanctions, it was unclear whether those punishments were sufficient. She would be interested to hear about specific measures to address Afrophobia and xenophobic public discourse and to protect persons of African descent and other foreign nationals from verbal and physical attacks. In that regard, the State Party might draw on the Committee's general recommendation No. 36 on preventing and combating racial profiling by law enforcement officials in its fight against hate speech and racially motivated violence. She wondered whether the State Party had developed a mechanism for monitoring hate speech incidents with the involvement of the police, the prosecution service, the courts and civil society. Had the State Party addressed the finding by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance that the prosecution service had unlimited discretion to decide whether to press charges in hate speech cases, with no remedy for victims? How many prosecutions or convictions for racist or xenophobic speech had been recorded since 2021?

57. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the police had strengthened cooperation with civil society by signing a memorandum of understanding with 14 NGOs in 2017. The memorandum provided a framework for activities such as detention facility visits, training, information exchange and educational initiatives, with the aim of enhancing transparency, improving detainee treatment and promoting human rights within the criminal justice system. A further memorandum of understanding had been signed with the Cyprus Red Cross Society in 2026.

58. As the national human rights institution and equality body, the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights played a central role in combating racism and discrimination. It could investigate complaints by members of minority groups and foreign nationals of discriminatory treatment on grounds such as race, national or ethnic origin, community, language and colour. In dealing with such complaints, the Office acted under its equality mandate or its wider human rights mandate depending on which framework afforded the highest level of protection in the circumstances of the case.

59. In its October 2022 report, the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions noted the information provided by the Office of the Ombudsman on the establishment of a human rights advisory committee to strengthen cooperation with civil society and enhance the Office's visibility. As the Subcommittee had highlighted the need for adequate funding to support the expanded mandate of the national human rights institution, the Office had subsequently strengthened its human resources through the recruitment of additional officers and support staff and the promotion of existing personnel.

60. The Office of the Law Commissioner was working to implement Council directive 2024/1499 of 7 May 2024, which would further consolidate and strengthen the equality body framework by introducing common minimum standards on the effectiveness, resources, independence and powers of equality bodies.

61. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the Government maintained continuous and constructive dialogue with civil society and organized workshops and seminars in cooperation with NGOs. It had worked with the Cyprus Refugee Council to ensure access to free legal aid and cooperated with Hope for Children and the International Organization for Migration to support the administration of semi-independent living units for unaccompanied minors.

62. Current legislation on the registration of associations did not exclude NGOs, provided that their statutes were in line with constitutional principles. In fact, the law conferred legal personality upon NGOs, meaning that they were eligible to access European and national funding. Overall, the legal framework remained open and supportive of new NGOs that were committed to assisting people in need. As public consultation in the drafting of laws was obligatory, NGOs were able to comment upon and shape new legislation.

63. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the scope of the national strategy for the protection and promotion of human rights included migrants, stateless persons, refugees and asylum-seekers. Cyprus embraced the European Union Anti-Racism Strategy 2026–2030, adopted in January 2026, which aimed to help member States to understand and effectively tackle structural racism, improve the collection of equality data and effectively apply the anti-discrimination legal framework. The Government looked forward to engaging constructively in the implementation of the forthcoming European Union strategy on victims' rights, which would enhance protections for victims throughout the Union.

64. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the police had recorded 36 cases of racially motivated verbal abuse, hate speech and threats in 2020; 39 cases in 2021; 30 in 2022; 56 in 2023 and 48 in 2024. A total of 158 cases had come before the courts, of which 40 were pending trial and 81 had resulted in convictions. The police would continue to act to prevent and punish discrimination and to investigate relevant offences, in close cooperation with all stakeholders.

65. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the Pedagogical Institute and the Educational Psychology Service continued to deliver training to develop teachers' skills in preventing all kinds of discrimination in schools, including bullying, sexual violence among pupils and racially or ethnically motivated exclusion. Other training included school-based seminars, network meetings, conferences in cooperation with relevant NGOs and other bodies, and training for policymakers to support their understanding of children's needs.

66. Measures were taken at all levels of education to enable pupils to acquire the appropriate attitudes to avoid participating in any incidents of violence or delinquency. The Law on Prevention and Combating of School Violence, which had entered into force in 2024, introduced new tools and mechanisms to support the development of the education system while ensuring equal learning opportunities for all pupils in a safe and inclusive environment. In November 2024, the Council of Ministers had approved the new National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of School Violence, which empowered and involved all stakeholders in the effort to prevent and address school violence and delinquency.

67. During the period under review, the Observatory on School Violence had undertaken a range of initiatives to support schools in improving the school climate and reducing violence. A national research project had been conducted between 2020 and 2024 to assess the problem of school violence, and its findings had informed policy decisions and been integrated into the National Strategy. To strengthen monitoring and accountability, the Observatory had developed and rolled out an electronic system for all school-related violence incidents. Data was stored in a centralized national database, allowing for systematic analysis and policy evaluation. The Observatory also maintained an online platform for the compulsory reporting of bullying incidents, enabling timely and effective response. During 2024/25, 510 incidents had been reported by 98 schools, including 2 incidents in kindergartens, 108 incidents in primary schools, 328 incidents in secondary schools and 72 incidents in technical schools. Fifty-three of those incidents had involved racism.

68. Since 2017, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth had supported the “Imagine” programme, implemented by the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research, in which Greek Cypriot pupils came into contact with Turkish Cypriot pupils of the same age. The programme had brought together over 7,200 pupils from all communities of the island and provided training to more than 1,500 teachers. In October 2022, the Turkish Cypriot authorities had unilaterally terminated their support for the programme. However, in February 2026, the Ministry had informed all schools that the programme would resume in the current school year.

69. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the Radio and Television Broadcasters Law had been amended in 2021 and now included provisions aimed at preventing discrimination and incitement to violence or hatred. Media service providers were required to ensure that audiovisual content did not contain material that incited violence or hatred against individuals or groups in a manner that violated fundamental rights. Commercial communications were subject to specific requirements, including a prohibition on promoting discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, nationality or religion or belief. Video-sharing platforms were required to adopt appropriate measures to protect the public from content that incited violence or hatred. Between 2020 and 2025, the Cyprus Radio, Television and Digital Services Authority had examined several complaints against broadcasters in relation to issues of racial discrimination.

70. **Ms. Shepherd** said that she was keen to know what sanctions had been imposed on Members of Parliament who practised xenophobic rhetoric and hate speech. The fact that there had been two bullying incidents involving kindergarten children in her view illustrated the need to strengthen the education of parents. She welcomed the efforts undertaken to address discriminatory content and to promote equality and human rights in the media, which would hopefully lead to a more tolerant society.

71. **Mr. Sibande**, noting the information provided on the new European Union Anti-Racism Strategy, said that he would appreciate an explanation of why Cyprus had failed to adopt a national action plan in line with the European Union Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020–2025.

72. Observing that a Coordinator of Religious Groups had been appointed under the Office of the Presidential Commissioner, he said he would be grateful if the delegation could describe the Coordinator’s role in combating racial discrimination and indicate whether the mandate covered Roma issues and was adequately funded. The delegation might also comment on reports that the Equal Treatment (Racial or Ethnic Origin) Law of 2004 did not prohibit discrimination in all fields of public life and therefore was not in conformity with the Convention.

73. He was concerned that, despite the anti-racism policy of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, racist bullying continued to take place in schools, the Observatory on School Violence did not publish statistics on the ethnicity of victims of racist bullying or violence, and children of African descent reportedly felt isolated at school. He wondered whether the Government considered that the anti-racism policy was working.

74. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that the Committee recognized the importance of the Council directive 2024/1499 of 7 May 2024. In that regard, she wished to know whether the State Party planned to strengthen the national human rights institution in its role as an equality body, including by granting it the right to initiate and participate in court proceedings.

75. **Mr. Diaby** said that the accreditation of the national human rights institution with A status was a welcome development. As that status meant that the Office of the Ombudsman was entitled to make statements during the review of the State Party’s report, he wondered whether it had not done so on account of budgetary issues, such as the need to prioritize its operations or the payment of salaries. He would be interested to hear about any steps taken to increase the Office’s budget so that it could carry out additional activities, such as investigations into complaints.

76. He was also concerned about the shrinking civic space available to NGOs that worked to protect migrants and minorities, especially in the light of the 2024 bomb attack on the offices of the NGO Action for Support, Equality and Anti-Racism (KISA) in Nicosia. As the

Committee understood that no one had been prosecuted for the bombing, he would be grateful for information about the authorities' response to that attack and similar attacks in other cities, including Chloraka and Limassol.

77. **A representative of Cyprus** said that, following an incident in which a male Member of Parliament had made racist remarks, the police had examined the case and consulted the Attorney General on the steps to be taken. However, the Attorney General had decided not to seek the lifting of the person's parliamentary immunity, finding that the remarks did not meet the legal threshold for hate speech prosecution. As a result, no charges were filed, and the case was effectively shelved due to lack of evidence of a criminal offence.

78. The Coordinator of Religious Groups attached to the Office of the Presidential Commissioner had received a broad mandate for coordinating policymaking and taking concrete measures to address the issues faced by recognized religious groups and affiliated persons, as well as Roma.

79. Cyprus had recently passed a law implementing the European Union Digital Services Act, which included a code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online. The law was designed to create a safer, fairer online environment by regulating digital intermediaries, protecting users from illegal content and safeguarding fundamental rights.

80. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the increased reporting of incidents showed the increased sensitivity of schools and teachers to issues of racism and discrimination. In March 2025, the conference "Building a society without racism" had been organized as part of the school network to support the implementation of the anti-racism policy, bringing together pupils, parents and teachers to promote dialogue, understanding and action against racism and discrimination. The Government considered that such activities contributed to building a better society.

81. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the Office of the Law Commissioner was currently assessing the degree to which the existing national legal framework already met the requirements of European Council directive on minimum standards for equality bodies and was examining the most appropriate manner of transposing it into domestic law. That process was being approached in a constructive and forward-looking manner with a view to strengthening and consolidating the legal framework governing the equality body of Cyprus. The deadline for implementing the directive was June 2026.

82. **Mr. Guissé**, supported by **Ms. Shepherd**, said that he wished to draw the delegation's attention to the joint general recommendation No. 38 of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and general comment No. 7 of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families on general guidelines for eradicating xenophobia towards migrants and others perceived as such. He believed that the tool would be useful to the State Party in its efforts to combat xenophobia, racism and hate speech.

83. **Ms. Tlakula** said that, in its previous concluding observations, the Committee had requested information on the training of law enforcement officers, judges, lawyers and other State officials. She was particularly interested to know what specialized training on the prevention of racial discrimination and the rights enshrined in the Convention was provided to judges.

84. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the delegation would ensure that the Cyprus Judicial Training School was made aware of the Committee's recommendations regarding the specialized training of judges.

85. **Ms. Shepherd** said that she would be interested to know whether the authorities had observed a decrease in racist behaviour as a result of the fines that were imposed on those who targeted footballers. She wondered whether other sports practised in the State Party were affected by racism to the same extent as football. She would welcome information on the prevalence of xenophobia and hate crimes in sport in general, including data on incidents and prosecutions in recent years.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.