



# International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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## Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

### 110th session

#### Summary record of the 3003rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 21 August 2023, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Shepherd

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

*Combined twelfth and thirteenth periodic reports of Turkmenistan*

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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)**

*Combined twelfth and thirteenth periodic reports of Turkmenistan  
(CERD/C/TKM/12-13; CERD/C/TKM/Q/12-13)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Turkmenistan joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Hajiyev** (Turkmenistan), introducing his country's combined twelfth and thirteenth periodic reports (CERD/C/TKM/12-13), said that a number of significant national and international events had occurred during the reporting period. In March 2022, the Government had signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations regarding the implementation of the national socioeconomic development plan for the period 2022–2052. In December 2022, it had conducted a complete population and housing census, according to which the population stood at 7,057,841, of whom just over 50 per cent were female and some 53 per cent lived in rural areas. The population was composed of more than 61 different ethnic groups, with persons who were not ethnic Turkmen making up 14 per cent of the population. In addition, in March 2020, the Mejlis, the parliament of Turkmenistan, had ratified the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention against Discrimination in Education and UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.
3. The Government had also adopted a number of action plans, including on children's rights, gender equality and human rights, which promoted and protected human rights for all, regardless of nationality, race, colour, sex, origin, property or official status, place of residence, language, religion or political opinion. A national action plan to combat trafficking was under development. United Nations agencies, representatives of voluntary associations, and members of academia and the media made substantial contributions to the development and implementation of those action plans.
4. In July 2022, a policy framework for the development of the judicial system had been approved, with the aim of improving the administration of justice, enhancing judicial protections for rights and ensuring the openness and accessibility of justice and the independence of the judiciary.
5. In October 2022, an assessment of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of Turkmenistan had been conducted, in collaboration with several international organizations. Various international organizations were also providing the Office with technical support. The Government had doubled its budget for 2022 compared with its 2021 budget.
6. To ensure social protection for all, each year the President ordered a 10 per cent increase in pensions, State benefits, the wages of employees of State-financed institutions and self-financing enterprises and voluntary associations, and educational scholarships.
7. The Government continued to incorporate the provisions of international human rights law into domestic legislation. Amendments had been made to the Criminal Code, which had entered into force in January 2023. The commission of an offence motivated by political, social, national or ethnic grounds, skin colour or religious hatred or enmity was now considered an aggravating circumstance. The amended Code also criminalized the direct or indirect violation of human or civil rights and freedoms on the grounds of ethnicity, skin colour, sex, origin, property and official status, place of residence, language, religion or political affiliation.
8. Incitement to racial hatred and acts of violence motivated by ethnic, racial or religious grounds were criminalized in Turkmenistan. In addition, in October 2020, the Government had adopted the Code of Administrative Procedure, which established equality for all before the law.
9. As a member of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Turkmenistan was helping to protect the rights of refugees and stateless persons and eliminate statelessness at the national level. The fundamental rights

and freedoms of stateless persons – including the right to citizenship of Turkmenistan – were protected by domestic law. In January 2019, the President had approved the National Plan of Action to End Statelessness for the period 2018–2024. In addition, the Government intended to hold a regional conference on the topic in 2024. Since 2011, some 29,700 persons had been granted Turkmen citizenship, and more than 4,400 foreign nationals and stateless persons had been granted residence permits.

10. The Government had adopted a national cultural development programme, which included events to mark the holidays of ethnic minorities. It was also working with UNESCO in the fields of education and science, including by establishing UNESCO departments and clubs at universities and helping schools join the UNESCO Associated Schools Network.

11. To foster intercultural dialogue and support multilingualism, Turkmenistan planned to sponsor a draft resolution during the forthcoming session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on the establishment of a World Day of Turkic Languages and to organize a week of side events, together with UNESCO and the International Organization of Turkic Culture, to mark the 300th anniversary of the birth of Turkmen poet Magtymguly Pyragy. The Government also planned to hold activities to celebrate the anniversaries of the adoption of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

12. **Ms. Chung** (Country Rapporteur) said that Turkmenistan remained one of the most closed societies in the world. No population statistics were publicly available, the borders were tightly controlled and there was seemingly little room for the development of an independent civil society. The Committee had not received any reports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or the Ombudsman. For the second consecutive year, the World Bank had excluded Turkmenistan from its annual report owing to a lack of reliable data. The Government had limited engagement with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. Not many foreigners entered Turkmenistan, and the procedures for Turkmen nationals to travel abroad were complicated. It was reported that the movement of people within the country was restricted because of the complicated system for registering citizens' places of residence, or the *propiska* system.

13. In the light of the 2022 population and housing census, the Committee would welcome disaggregated data on the current demographic composition of the population, including the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons, and the number of Turkmen nationals who were living outside the country. It would also be useful to have economic and social indicators for various groups living in Turkmenistan and statistics on politicians, parliamentarians, judges and law enforcement officers, and on the prison population, broken down by ethnic origin. She asked whether the Government planned to make public the results of the 2022 population and housing census.

14. In its periodic report, the State party had said that the Criminal Code prohibited the "direct or indirect violation" of human and civil rights and freedoms on various grounds. She would like to know how the law defined those two types of violation. In addition, the Committee would be interested to learn whether any steps had been taken to adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, what legal provisions were in place to ensure access to effective and appropriate remedies for victims of discrimination and what measures had been taken to combat racism, racial discrimination and intolerance at the national level. She wished to know what progress had been achieved through the National Action Plan on Human Rights 2016–2020, whether lessons learned from the implementation of that Plan had been taken into account when drafting the National Action Plan on Human Rights 2021–2025, whether there were major differences between the two plans and whether they had been followed up with systematic reforms.

15. The Committee would be grateful if the delegation could explain why the Labour Code did not include all the grounds for discrimination provided for in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Labour Organization Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). She wished to know what special measures were in place to support disadvantaged minority groups and what steps had been taken to raise awareness among civil servants, law enforcement officials and judicial officers regarding the prohibition of racial discrimination

and the remedies available to victims. She wondered why the Constitution prohibited the establishment of political parties on ethnic or religious grounds.

16. It would be interesting to learn why no complaints or national court hearings citing article 145 of the Criminal Code, which criminalized racial discrimination, had been recorded during the reporting period. She wished to know how many complaints of racial discrimination, racist hate speech and racist hate crime had been registered by any court or national institution other than the Ombudsman during the reporting period and how many had led to investigations, prosecutions and convictions. She would also welcome information on the domestic implementation of the Convention and on the measures in place to support the implementation of the Government's various action plans.

17. She wished to know whether the constitutional provisions prohibiting interference in the independence of judges had ever been enforced and what punishment was applicable in such cases. Given that judges could not be arrested or charged with criminal offences without the agreement of the President, she wondered what checks and balances were in place to limit that power and what the process was for obtaining presidential approval in such cases. Noting that the President appeared to have full control over the judiciary, including the sole authority to dismiss judges, she asked how the State party guaranteed the independence and impartiality of the judiciary.

18. **Mr. Guissé** (Country Task Force) said that it would be useful to know what measures had been taken to strengthen the ability of the Ombudsman to monitor progress in the implementation of the Convention, what mandate the Ombudsman had to investigate complaints of racial discrimination and whether the Government had considered expanding the Ombudsman's mandate on preventive visits to places of detention, including for her staff. As the Ombudsman was responsible for handling complaints of rights violations by government bodies and officials, he wished to know what procedures were in place to assess complaints, what remedies were available to victims and whether there were specific procedures for investigating racial discrimination. He also asked whether the Ombudsman maintained public records of its activities.

19. The Committee wished to know what measures had been taken to bring the Criminal Code and other relevant legislation on racist hate speech, incitement to racial hatred and racist hate crime into line with article 4 of the Convention and how the Government ensured that measures to combat hate speech did not place disproportionate constraints on the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association of civil society organizations, human rights defenders and journalists.

20. He would be grateful if the delegation could explain what the process was for handling cases of racial discrimination that fell under article 145 of the Criminal Code, what criteria needed to be met to convict a person of racial discrimination and what measures were in place to ensure that article 145 was enforced consistently throughout the law enforcement and judicial system.

21. It would be useful to know what programmes had been introduced to support the objectives of the National Action Plan on Human Rights 2016–2020 and what measures the Plan had contained to help investigate and combat racist hate speech.

22. Given the lack of information about civil society organizations in the periodic report, he wished to know how many such organizations were registered in Turkmenistan, how many were concerned with the rights of ethnic minorities and what rules applied to them. Lastly, he would welcome information on the protections available to persons who expressed dissent and on the measures in place to ensure that civil society organizations, human rights defenders and journalists were able to carry out their work effectively and efficiently.

23. **Mr. Kut** (Follow-up Coordinator) said that he wished to commend the State party on its timely submission of an interim report on issues selected for follow-up in the Committee's previous concluding observations adopted in December 2016 ([CERD/C/TKM/CO/8-11](#)). The Committee would also highlight issues in its forthcoming concluding observations and would request an interim report within one year.

24. The Committee had recommended that the State party ensure that article 177 of the Criminal Code and other domestic legislation criminalizing hate speech were in line with the

Convention. Noting that the amended version of the Criminal Code had entered into force in January 2023, he said that the Committee would appreciate further information on its implementation and on whether article 177 was in line with the Convention.

25. With regard to the recommendation to ensure the effectiveness and independence of the Ombudsman, he wished to know why the State party was not a member of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) despite the fact that, according to the report, the authorities were determined to comply with the Paris Principles. He wished to know what was preventing the State party from achieving category A status.

26. **Ms. Ali Al-Misnad** said that, although the Constitution guaranteed equal rights for citizens, irrespective of their ethnicity, colour, sex, origin or religion, she had read a report that the police in Lebap Province had detained 10 Muslim men in January 2021, allegedly for practising their religion, and had shaved off their beards and forced them to drink alcohol.

27. While paragraph 43 of the State party report described in detail the powers of the Ombudsman to supervise and inspect State bodies and other government institutions, no mention was made of individual complaints of racism or other human rights violations. She wondered why the Office of the Ombudsman seemed to be focused on government entities rather than individual communications.

28. **Ms. Tlakula** said that she would be grateful for information on the procedure for the appointment and dismissal of judges. She wished to know whether civil society organizations and the Ombudsman had been consulted on the drafting of the State party's report.

29. During the universal periodic review of Turkmenistan in 2018, the State party had supported the recommendation that it should enable the Office to be accredited with A status, in accordance with the Paris Principles. She would like to know what progress had been made in that regard.

30. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that, according to the State party's report, the Constitution had been amended to remove the limit on judges' tenure. He therefore wished to hear about their previous tenure, whether they now enjoyed security of tenure until their retirement and whether there was in fact a mandatory retirement age.

31. The title of the table in annex 1 of the report referred to women and members of other ethnicities employed in the judicial system. The implication was that women constituted a separate ethnicity. According to the table, the staff of the judicial system totalled 858, of whom 383 were women. He wished to know whether the numbers referred to judges alone or to other staff members as well.

32. According to the opening statement, the current population of the State party totalled 7,057,841. However, that figure had been contested by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which claimed that, according to anonymous sources, the population was actually fewer than 2.8 million. The media organization had requested a comment from the Government but none had been received.

33. **Mr. Diaby** said that the Committee had been informed that Mr. Pygamberdy Allaberdyev, a lawyer and human rights defender, had been falsely arrested and was still awaiting trial. Ms. Khursanai Ismatullaeva, a physician and human rights defender, had also been detained. He therefore asked whether the State party would enact a law aimed at protecting human rights defenders. The police and law enforcement officers had been accused of the excessive use of force, of unduly conducting traffic checks on women drivers and of prohibiting them from sitting in the front seat of taxis. The Constitution of Turkmenistan prohibited dual citizenship. He wished to know whether measures had been taken to protect persons who had renounced their original nationality before requesting Turkmen citizenship, since they would become stateless if their request was denied. He asked whether the Ombudsman was entitled to provide assistance to victims before the courts. He also wished to know whether the State party would consider making the declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention.

34. **Ms. Tebie** said that, according to the State party's report, employment and social statistics did not take citizens' ethnicity into account. She therefore wished to know whether

special measures were envisaged for minority groups that were inadequately represented in employment and other areas.

35. **Ms. Chung** said that, according to reports by the International Partnership for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch, genuinely independent media and civil society groups were unable to operate in the State party, and Turkmen organizations in exile had been subjected to pressure. She would be grateful if the delegation could comment on those reports. She would also welcome statistics on such expatriate organizations. Many international NGOs claimed that the Government was intolerant of political pluralism, independent media and NGOs. The fact that the Committee had not received any NGO report provided sound evidence, in her view, of that claim.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.05 p.m. and resumed at 4.25 p.m.*

36. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the national human rights action plans for 2015–2020 and 2021–2025 had taken into account the recommendations received from human rights treaty bodies. An assessment of the first action plan had been conducted in coordination with international experts when the second action plan was being developed. The High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe had recently visited Turkmenistan.

37. The United Nations Development Programme in Turkmenistan and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Regional Office for Central Asia had implemented a joint project to enhance the institutional capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman in 2021 and 2022. A road map for accreditation from GANHRI and recommendations on cooperation with law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and the Bar Association of Turkmenistan had been developed. An analysis of compliance of the Ombudsman Act with the Paris Principles had also been conducted.

38. In 2022, a total of 523 citizens' complaints had been registered with the Office of the Ombudsman, of which 356 had been submitted in writing and 167 had been submitted orally. Reports on the Office's activities were submitted to the Mejlis and published on its website. Consultations on GANHRI accreditation issues had been held with many international organizations, and a review of the work of the Office would shortly be published. The Office planned to submit an application for accreditation with A status in late 2023 or early 2024.

39. The Interdepartmental Commission on Compliance with the International Obligations Undertaken by Turkmenistan in the Field of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law had been established in 2007 by a presidential decree. It was coordinated by the Institute of State, Law and Democracy of Turkmenistan, and its members included deputies of leading ministries and departments, members of the Mejlis, representatives of law enforcement agencies and representatives of voluntary associations. Since the establishment of the Commission, national reports had been submitted on time to United Nations treaty bodies, and priority was accorded to the implementation of their concluding observations.

40. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the population exceeded 7 million people, according to the census of December 2022. The share of ethnicities other than Turkmen was about 14 per cent, or almost 1 million people. About 3.3 million people were currently employed. All available data would shortly be published on the site of the State Statistics Committee. The population data mentioned by Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen were outdated.

41. A total of 70,142 citizens had recently entered the country and more than 12,000 Turkmen citizens had departed. Citizenship had been granted in recent years to more than 30,000 stateless persons. In 2022, citizenship had been granted to 7,600 persons from 35 different ethnic groups, including Uzbeks, Russians, Armenians, Tatars, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Ukrainians, Iranians, Kyrgyz, Belarusians, Latvians, Moldovans, Chinese, Germans, Turks and Uighurs. Following naturalization, they had equal access to rights and freedoms. During the period from 2011 to 2023, refugee status had been granted to a number of families living in the country, some from Afghanistan and some from Azerbaijan.

42. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that, as of August 2023, foreign citizens made up 0.1 per cent of the prison population in his country. Several decrees had been issued pardoning detainees, which was a demonstration of his Government's commitment to upholding human rights and freedoms. From 2016 to 2022, pardons were offered on 26

occasions, and more than 500 citizens from non-Turkmen backgrounds had been released from prison as a result. The conditions of detention for foreign citizens and Turkmen nationals, regardless of whether they came from an ethnic majority or minority background, were identical and their rights and freedoms were respected.

43. Mr. Allaberdyev was indeed a Turkmen citizen. He had been sentenced to prison following a conviction for criminal mischief and causing moderate bodily harm. On 9 December 2022 he had been pardoned and released. Ms. Ismatullaeva had been sentenced to prison for serious fraud and forgery of documents. She had also been released following a pardon on 9 December 2022.

44. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that there were no voluntary associations in his country that dealt with ethnic minority issues and no registration requests had been received for such organizations. New legislation on NGOs had been adopted on 22 August 2020, which provided for a simplification of the registration process and the lifting of some restrictions. There were 136 registered voluntary associations in the country, including 15 arts or scholarly organizations, 59 were sporting organizations, 9 organizations of persons with disability, 12 environmental organizations, 12 business organizations and others. There were 134 registered religious organizations, including 111 Islamic organizations, 19 Orthodox Christian and 12 professing other religions. In 2023, more than 2,000 Turkmen nationals had made a pilgrimage to Mecca, including persons who were not ethnic Turkmen.

45. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that all forms of discrimination were prohibited under the Social Protection Code and the Labour Code, among other legislation. The Constitution recognized human rights and freedoms and the generally recognized rules of international law. All persons were equal before the law and the courts, irrespective of ethnic background, skin colour, sex, origin, property or official status, place of residence, language, attitude towards religion or political beliefs. There were penalties for inciting ethnic, racial or religious hatred, which were considered to be aggravating factors under the Criminal Code and Code of Administrative Offences. The new Criminal Code established criminal responsibility for inciting ethnic, racial or religious hatred when acting in an official capacity, as a member of a voluntary association or by prior conspiracy. The Mejlis had held more than 10 briefings and dialogues with experts in order to study international best practices on that matter.

46. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the independence of the judiciary was guaranteed under the Constitution and the Court Act. Judges were independent and subject only to the Constitution and the law. Interference by any party in the administration of justice was prohibited on pain of administrative and criminal penalties. The inviolability of judges applied to the judge's person, property, place of residence and work, service and private vehicles and other assets. A policy framework for the improvement of the judicial system and an implementation plan had been adopted for the period 2022–2028. The aim of the framework was to ensure the independence of the judiciary, improve the administration of justice, protect human rights and ensure access to justice. It also aimed to broaden the pool of qualified staff for the justice system. The framework covered the introduction of information and communication technologies and the study of international best practices. It also sought to strengthen the information centre of the Supreme Court and raise public awareness about case law and the relevant laws and regulations over the Internet and the media, including on the subject of racial discrimination. From 2018 to 2023, judges had taken part in more than 300 international training sessions, including on international best practices in relation to eliminating racial discrimination. The Supreme Court regularly provided advanced training to judges and other judicial officers.

47. **Mr. Hajiyev** (Turkmenistan) said that since 2007 a system had been in place in his country to ensure compliance with international human rights obligations. Some stand-alone measures had been implemented and action plans had been developed to that end.

48. It was not true that entering his country was challenging. Once the restrictions related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had been lifted the number of visitors had increased by over 10 per cent compared to the period before the pandemic. Those visitors included businesspeople. A programme to boost tourism was being developed which would include a more streamlined procedure for obtaining a visa. While his Government recognized

its international obligations, it was also responsible for ensuring the safety of Turkmen citizens, taking into consideration the geopolitical situation in the region.

49. There were many negative stereotypes related to the residence permit, or *propiska*, system. However, it was simply a system for registering permanent residence and it did not give rise to restrictions on freedom of movement, labour rights or social and economic rights. It was possible to move freely in the country without *propiska* registration, with the exception of the border areas.

50. The Turkmen people had shown tolerance throughout their history. Following the collapse of the former Soviet Union there had not been significant outward migration and there had been no racial, ethnic or religious conflict in the country since that time, which was unusual in the region. There had never been issues related to racial discrimination that were serious enough to necessitate the development of a strategy to combat racial discrimination. Various conflicts in the region had led to an inflow of Azerbaijani, Armenian, Tajik and Afghan people. Many Afghans had been granted temporary asylum and some had stayed permanently. There were some 2,000 stateless persons in Turkmenistan. During the upcoming celebrations of the country's independence, some stateless persons would be granted citizenship and a number of foreign citizens would receive residence permits.

51. Efforts were being made to bring the Office of the Ombudsman into line with the Paris Principles. International human rights experts had noted that the Office was not sufficiently independent. The Ombudsman regularly took part in international events with a view to improving that situation.

52. An awareness-raising and outreach programme had been developed to foster tolerant attitudes to persons of different ethnicities. The necessary measures were taken to ensure that all citizens could enjoy freedom of religion, while ensuring the safety and security of all.

53. There had been false reports that women had been subjected to undue police checks, including in beauty salons. Such misinformation had to do with steps that the authorities had been obliged to take to protect women from harmful practices in unregistered beauty salons that were not up to health standards. Some beauty salons had been closed down. The measures had been aimed at protecting the health of women and not preventing them from using services.

54. Under article 7 of the Constitution, dual citizenship was not recognized in Turkmenistan. However, dual citizens did not have to renounce their other citizenship; it simply was not recognized. There had been a bilateral agreement on dual nationality with the Russian Federation, but it had been discontinued in 2015. Some citizens still held both Turkmen and Russian citizenship.

55. There were no special measures for ethnic minorities. No distinctions were drawn on the grounds of ethnicity. National development plans and strategies applied equally to persons from all ethnic backgrounds. There were no statistics on members of expatriate NGOs. All citizens had the right to express their opinions outside of the country. There were no ethnic minority NGOs as such because there had been no registration requests from such organizations. Nevertheless, there were Turkish, Russian and Ukrainian cultural centres in the country and bilateral agreements and programmes were in place to enable speakers of languages other than Turkmen to pursue an education in their native language. Several thousand Turkmen citizens from Uzbek backgrounds, for example, were receiving education in Uzbekistan.

56. **Ms. Chung** said that she wished to know whether the population and housing census included information on the socioeconomic status and representation of ethnic minorities in political office, and whether the State party took any particular steps to help persons who had acquired Turkmen citizenship to adapt to the local culture. In addition, she wondered which government agencies were responsible for assessing the implementation of national action plans, and whether the Office of the Ombudsman and civil society organizations were involved in the drafting process.

57. **Mr. Hajiye** (Turkmenistan) said that stateless persons in Turkmenistan who had become naturalized included those residing in the country following the collapse of the Soviet Union who had applied for Turkmen citizenship. Those who had not done so for various

reasons had remained stateless. Persons who had entered the country because they had fled the civil war in Tajikistan or the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had since been granted citizenship in Turkmenistan after residing in the country for decades. As the refugees had integrated well into the local communities, including sending their children to the local schools, receiving social services, speaking the national language and running businesses, there had been no need to adopt special social integration measures. Under the Refugees Act and other legislation pertaining to citizenship, stateless persons enjoyed virtually the same rights as citizens, except for the right to participate in elections. There were plans to publish population census data disaggregated by ethnic and social group in the near future.

58. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that a working group had been set up under the Interdepartmental Commission on Compliance with the International Obligations Undertaken by Turkmenistan in the Field of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law to assess the implementation of all national action plans related to human rights. The working group was made up of representatives of the relevant ministries and departments, human rights organizations and voluntary associations and brought in international experts, scholars and representatives of civil society to conduct its assessments. Shortcomings identified in those assessments were addressed in subsequent national action plans, as had been the case for the recently adopted plan on the rights of the child for the period 2023–2028.

59. **Mr. Guissé** said that, whereas the delegation had provided information on the number of civil society organizations with social and religious purposes in the country, he wished to know how many of those organizations worked in the area of human rights. He would be grateful to know whether international organizations were permitted to register in the State party. Lastly, while he appreciated the information provided on the number of complaints of hate speech submitted to the Office of the Ombudsman, he wished to know what steps had been taken to follow up those complaints.

60. **Ms. Esseneme** said that it would be helpful to know how many of the complaints submitted to the Office of the Ombudsman had concerned racial discrimination, what steps had been taken to follow up those complaints, and how the Office had cooperated with the judicial authorities in that regard.

61. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the aforementioned Interdepartmental Commission included representatives of such voluntary associations as the Women's Union of Turkmenistan, the Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan, the Youth Union of Turkmenistan and the Peace Fund of Turkmenistan, among other groups. Civil society participated in drafting reports for submission to the treaty bodies. Within the framework of the National Plan of Action on Human Rights and the Central Asia Rule of Law Programme of the Council of Europe, in October 2023, Turkmenistan would be hosting an international conference on best practices in the legal profession in Ashgabat.

62. **A representative of Turkmenistan** said that the development of social services in Turkmenistan was gaining pace. A number of voluntary associations in the country provided psychological and legal assistance to vulnerable persons and raised awareness of the Government's obligations under the international treaties to which it was party, while the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection had recently launched a project to provide comprehensive social services to vulnerable persons. Dozens of social workers had been trained and posted throughout the country to that end. Furthermore, two universities in Turkmenistan were shortly due to open university departments for the training of social workers.

63. **Ms. Tebie** said that, while the delegation had asserted that data on the ethnic origin of citizens was not collected because all citizens enjoyed equal rights, she wondered whether persons belonging to ethnic minorities had submitted complaints concerning the violation of their rights. In addition, she would be grateful to know whether the Ombudsman carried out the same functions as the national human rights institutions of other countries.

64. **Mr. Diaby** said that he wished to know what steps the State party was taking to assist those persons who had been left by the wayside as a result of the termination of the bilateral agreement on dual nationality with the Russian Federation in 2015.

65. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he would like to know how the State party ensured the financial independence of the judiciary, and on what grounds judges could be dismissed.

66. **Mr. Hajiyev** (Turkmenistan) said that, thus far, there had been no question of registration of international human rights organizations in the country. His Government was still at the stage of dialogue and cooperation with such organizations. If the dialogue was constructive and unbiased, Turkmenistan was prepared to enhance such cooperation. However, the dialogue must be a two-way street.

67. The Office of the Ombudsman handled complaints in cooperation with law enforcement bodies, the courts and local authorities. It also played a monitoring role through its meetings with top law enforcement officials, local authorities and the Office of the Procurator General and discussed complaints at those meetings. No complaints had been filed concerning acts of racial discrimination or hate speech. Most communications submitted to the Ombudsman entailed complaints against local authorities and law enforcement bodies. Others involved property or debt claims. The various national action plans implemented by the Government raised awareness of the ability to submit complaints. The Office of the Ombudsman and the aforementioned Interdepartmental Commission were separate entities. The Commission was responsible for monitoring the human rights obligations undertaken by Turkmenistan. It met three times a year to monitor the status of implementation of human rights treaties by the relevant ministries.

68. In 1993, there had been an exodus of Turkmen citizens of Russian ethnic origin to the Russian Federation. Since the bilateral agreement on dual nationality with the Russian Federation had been terminated in 2015, Turkmenistan had been working to resolve all outstanding issues of citizenship and residency status both in Turkmenistan and abroad. Time and age limits were imposed on the terms of judges to help to prevent corruption.

69. **Ms. Tlakula** said that she would still appreciate hearing about the process for appointing and dismissing judges in the State party.

*The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.*