



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 2987th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 9 August 2023, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Shepherd

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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 ninth to fourteenth periodic reports of Croatia (CERD/C/HRV/9-14; CERD/C/HRV/Q/9-14)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Croatia joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Tahiri** (Croatia), introducing his country's combined ninth to fourteenth periodic reports (CERD/C/HRV/9-14), said that since submitting its initial report Croatia had faced numerous challenges – many of which were ongoing – and had achieved many successes. He highlighted in particular his country's becoming a full member of the European Union and its efforts to continually improve its response to the migrant crisis and to address the particularly dramatic effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and two earthquakes. Most recently, it had passed legislation extending temporary protection to persons displaced from Ukraine.
3. The Government had adopted various pieces of legislation as part of its efforts to ensure the implementation of the Convention. In 2009, the Anti-Discrimination Act had entered into force, providing protection against various forms of discrimination on 17 grounds, including race, ethnic affiliation, colour and national origin. The Act also placed the burden of proof on the accused person and provided for the use of collective action lawsuits. In addition, between 1997 and 2017, various amendments had been made to the Criminal Code with the aim of eliminating racial discrimination. Hate could now be considered an aggravating circumstance in any criminal offence. Minimum standards of support and protection for victims had been established, and a new mandatory procedure had been introduced for assessing the risk of secondary and repeated victimization and for preventing intimidation and retaliation during criminal proceedings. A revised protocol for procedures in cases of hate crimes had been adopted, in accordance with which an improved system for recording and monitoring hate crimes had been established. Information was thus gathered inter alia on criminal motives, the obligations of the competent authorities and the degree of cooperation between authorities in promoting education to combat hate crimes.
4. The Government had made various efforts to protect and promote the rights of the 22 national minorities recognized in the Constitution. The Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities had been amended, and following the adoption of the Act on the Register and Coordination of Councils and Representatives of National Minorities and the Act on the Election of Councils and Representatives of National Minorities, the Government had developed a unique framework that ensured that national minorities achieved adequate representation within the executive branch. In 2020, persons from ethnic minorities had also been elected to various key positions, including the posts of Vice-President of the Parliament and Deputy Prime Minister. In 2021, 278 individuals from national minorities had been elected to representative bodies at the local and regional levels, including as deputy mayors and deputy prefects.
5. The Government supported national minorities through specialized operational programmes, to which it allocated an annual budget of €40 million. Through national minority umbrella associations, investments were made to establish and maintain cultural institutions, to commemorate victims from national minorities who had been killed during the Second World War and the Homeland War and to support the development of regions with high concentrations of the groups those associations represented.
6. Since 2003, Croatia had been implementing public policies to support the Roma national minority, taking into account data-based improvements and the findings of independent evaluations. Thanks to such efforts, including in particular the work done as part of the current National Plan for Roma Inclusion 2021–2027, the primary school enrolment rate for Roma children had risen to over 95 per cent and material deprivation (including housing deprivation) among Roma communities had decreased significantly. Access to drinking water had also improved, and the poverty rate had declined. While the vast majority of Roma children attended integrated schools, the Government was aware that there were regional disparities. It was working with the Roma community, local and regional

governments and the Ombudsperson to improve infrastructure and access to services for Roma communities.

7. In March 2023, the Government had adopted a National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination for the period until 2027, with the aim of facilitating coordination among government bodies, supplementing existing policies and raising awareness of human rights. Its adoption was a reflection of the country's commitment at the highest level to implementing the Convention. Croatia was continuing to learn from past challenges. In particular, the 2015 migrant crisis had exposed weaknesses in the country's migrant integration policies and capacities and the need to overcome fear and prejudice. Croatia was also determined to continue commemorating the victims of all crimes motivated by ethnicity, race or nationality. It had recently assumed the presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

8. **Ms. Tlakula** (Country Rapporteur) said that the Committee would be grateful to learn when the State party intended to update its common core document to take into account the results of the 2021 national population census. It would be particularly useful to the Committee to receive disaggregated data on the main demographic changes, on the socioeconomic indicators for the various groups living in Croatia and on the number of migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons in the country. While the Committee welcomed the use of self-identification, it was concerned at the lack of information provided about the State party's methodology and its policies for data-gathering. According to the Ombudsperson, between 2011 and 2021 the number of persons self-identifying as Serbs had decreased. Noting that the Ombudsperson had attributed the decline to prejudice against the Serbian national minority, she would like to know what the Government thought had caused the decrease.

9. The Committee had received reports that few of the activities envisaged in the action plan for the implementation of the National Plan for Combating Discrimination for the period 2017–2019 had been implemented. It would welcome information on the implementation of the Plan, including the time frames and resources allocated to it and the results achieved. It would also be useful to receive information on the findings of any official evaluations of the impact of the National Plan for Combating Discrimination for the period 2017–2022. She would be grateful to learn whether civil society had been consulted during the drafting of the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination 2023–2027 and the two associated action plans adopted in March 2023. In that connection, she would like to learn what measures were in place to ensure the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of those policies and to guarantee accountability in the event of non-implementation.

10. She noted that the Anti-Discrimination Act applied to the conduct of all State, local and regional authorities and all legal and physical entities. The Committee was concerned about reports that certain local authorities were not only failing to implement anti-discrimination measures; they were also impeding the application of such measures specifically in order to provide unequal treatment to Serbs, especially in areas that had experienced direct armed conflict in the 1990s. Citing a report that the mayor of Vukovar had rejected a decision of the Constitutional Court on the need to respect the right to equal use of the Serbian language, she said she would like to know what actions had been taken against the mayor and what steps had been taken to ensure the full implementation of anti-discrimination legislation and policies, especially at the local level.

11. Noting that special measures had been taken to promote the employment of members of national minorities in the public sector, she said that the Committee would like to know whether special measures had been adopted or were planned in other areas, such as health and education. The Committee would also appreciate information on the assessment of such measures and the results achieved to date and would like to find out whether members of national minorities, including members of the Roma community, were consulted on their design and implementation.

12. According to a report issued by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in 2018, very few crimes of hate speech had been prosecuted, and the courts rarely recognized racist motivation as an aggravating circumstance. Moreover, the

courts usually limited themselves to applying the provisions of the Anti-Discrimination Act and the Act on Public Order and Peace Offences only in respect of minor offences, which prescribed mild penalties that were not an effective deterrent. The ECRI report also highlighted the fact that attacks against Serbs and members of the Roma community went unreported due to a lack of trust in the police force and the judiciary and a lack of awareness of the complaint mechanism. The Committee would appreciate updated statistics and information on complaints of racial discrimination, racist hate speech and racist hate crimes filed with the courts or national institutions, including by Serbs and Roma persons, and on the number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions of perpetrators. It would also be grateful for information on cases in which articles 56 and 87 of the Criminal Code, which defined aggravating circumstances, had been applied.

13. She wished to hear about capacity-building for police officers, prosecutors and judicial personnel in the area of criminal law relating to racial discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes and about the mandate, composition and activities of the working group for monitoring hate crimes. She also would like to find out about measures that had been taken or were being planned to raise public awareness of complaint mechanisms on racial discrimination and hate speech, particularly among vulnerable groups, such as members of the Serbian minority and the Roma community, and to ensure that those mechanisms were accessible to victims.

14. Referring to the Committee's general recommendation No. 36 on preventing and combating racial profiling, she said she would like to receive information on measures taken to prevent discriminatory violence by the police and other law enforcement officers and to ensure accountability for incidents of discriminatory violence. The Committee would like to receive information on the number of complaints, investigations and convictions relating to incidents of discriminatory police violence and brutality.

15. The Committee would be grateful for information on the implementation of the recommendations issued in 2019 by the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). The Subcommittee had encouraged the Office of the Ombudsperson to promote broad consultation and the participation of civil society in the process for the selection and appointment of members of the Office, to prevent the Ombudsperson from being reappointed more than once and to continue advocating for adequate funding to enable it to execute its mandate effectively and to ensure its accessibility.

16. **Mr. Balcerzak** (Country Task Force) said that the period of implementation of the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma had ended in 2020. The Committee would therefore welcome information on the main results achieved and the difficulties encountered. The Committee had been informed of a number of shortcomings in the action plan for the implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Plan (2021–2027). For instance, no activities were reportedly planned for about 30 per cent of its measures, including some 75 per cent of the measures relating to health and effective equal access to quality health-care services. He would like to receive detailed information on the implementation of the action plan and on its budgetary allocations. The Committee also wished to know whether members of the Roma community and civil society organizations had been consulted on the design and implementation of the plans and whether the monitoring mechanism was the same as for the National Strategy which had ended in 2020.

17. Members of the Roma community were reportedly subjected to negative stereotypes and structural and intersectional discrimination. Over 90 per cent were poor, and about 70 per cent of Roma families lived in extreme poverty. They encountered impediments to their education, employment, housing and health care. The Committee would welcome updated information on their unemployment rate and on measures taken to combat prejudice and negative stereotypes and to eliminate structural discrimination against them. It would also be useful to hear about the impact of measures taken during the COVID-19 pandemic to improve the socioeconomic status of Roma communities, including by improving their access to health care, vaccination and social welfare benefits.

18. The Committee had been informed that about 46 per cent of Roma persons still lived in isolated and segregated Roma settlements with poor housing conditions, a lack of basic

services and an environment unsuitable for children and young people. He would like to learn about measures that had been taken or planned to guarantee the right of the Roma community to proper housing with adequate infrastructure, roads, electricity and water. The Committee would also appreciate an update on the extent of the housing infrastructure that had not been fully legalized.

19. According to a provision of the Social Welfare Act, when a family with underage children was left without a home in a crisis situation, local and regional governments were obliged to provide them with accommodation. The Committee had been informed that in the town of Novi Vinodolski, the county and the local government shared responsibility for the provision of alternative accommodation, but that such services were not adequately regulated and were not provided in practice.

20. In 2010, the European Court of Human Rights had concluded in the case of *Oršuš and others v. Croatia* that there were insufficient safeguards in the schooling arrangements for Roma children, given their special needs as members of a disadvantaged group. The children were placed in separate classes and had a special curriculum. Although the State party had implemented various measures pursuant to the judgment and had decided that it had been fully executed in 2017, the situation had reportedly not really improved. The Committee had been informed that Roma pupils were still segregated in elementary education and that almost half of Roma children attended ethnically segregated classes in the counties of Međimurje, Varaždin and Brod-Posavina. Dropout rates were high, especially in elementary school, and enrolment rates remained low in secondary education.

21. The Committee would welcome information about measures taken to eliminate de facto segregation of Roma students and on their school attendance and dropout rates and measures taken to prevent dropout. It also wished to know how many Roma teachers were employed in the education system and how the quality of education provided to Roma students was assessed. For instance, was there now a standard curriculum for all students?

22. The State party's report referred to the drafting of a curriculum aimed at enabling pupils of the Roma national minority to learn their mother tongue and to sit for examinations in the language and script in which they were educated. The Committee would appreciate an update.

23. **Mr. Kut** (Follow-up Coordinator) said that the Committee had, in its previous concluding observations (CERD/C/HRV/CO/8), requested a follow-up report within one year on the implementation of three recommendations. Unfortunately, no such report had been submitted. As the Committee attached great importance to the follow-up procedure, it hoped that a timely interim report would be submitted following the current dialogue.

24. The Committee had recommended in its previous concluding observations that the State party should prosecute all cases of hate crimes and other ethnically motivated crimes, ensure that the new criminal law complied fully with article 4 of the Convention and strengthen its efforts to educate civil servants and law enforcement officials with regard to non-discrimination. The Committee would appreciate updated information on the adoption, implementation and impact of the legal and policy infrastructure.

25. The Committee's second recommendation had concerned the return of refugees and displaced persons and the reintegration of returnees. The current periodic report had addressed the issue, but the Committee wished to hear about the impact of recent amendments to laws and regulations in respect of those groups.

26. The third recommendation had concerned the creation of conditions for sustainable development in areas inhabited by the most numerous minorities, including the Serbian and Roma communities, and the effective implementation of the Act on Areas of Special State Concern. The Committee would be interested to hear an update of recent developments on that subject.

27. **A representative of Croatia** said that she worked in the Office of the Ombudsperson, which handled complaints of discrimination, conducted field visits, for example to Roma settlements or rural areas, participated in litigation on discrimination cases and submitted an annual report to the Croatian Parliament.

28. The largest number of complaints received by the Office concerned discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin, particularly against members of the Roma and Serbian communities and migrants. Roma persons were also at risk of intersectional discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin and socioeconomic status. Their poverty rate was very high, and about 46 per cent of the Roma community lived in isolated and spatially segregated Roma settlements.

29. Although the annual reports of the Office of the Ombudsperson submitted to the Parliament in 2021 and 2022 had recommended the adoption of an action plan for the desegregation of Roma students, segregation had persisted in 10 elementary schools in 2022, half of which were located in Međimurje County. Some schools had segregated classes and there were also two completely segregated district schools.

30. Members of the Serbian national minority and persons of Serbian origin were still exposed to prejudice and negative sentiments. Those who returned to their pre-war residences were vulnerable to discrimination, frequently on the grounds of their national origin, age and socioeconomic status, and lived in underdeveloped rural areas where obtaining basic services such as water and electricity remained a challenge.

31. The country's policy on the integration of persons who were granted international protection had expired in 2019. There was a lack of systematic integration measures, including for the provision of Croatian language courses, housing, employment, education and access to the health-care system.

32. There had recently been a large increase in the number of foreign workers in Croatia, and there was a lack of information on available instruments and procedures for the protection of their labour and employment rights and their right to use their languages.

33. **Ms. Ali Al-Misnad** said that, according to the report, many steps had been taken to persuade employers to recruit more Roma employees. She wished to know what proportion of the total Roma population had access to employment.

34. While she noted that certain measures had been taken to alleviate the Roma community's housing problems, she would like to find out how many Roma families still lacked quality housing.

35. **Mr. Diaby** said that he wished to know why the State party had not opened an investigation into racist chanting at a football match by fans of the Dinamo Zagreb football club, with a view to identifying and penalizing the perpetrators under the 2009 Anti-Discrimination Act. The Committee would like to receive more information on the protection of human rights defenders under the Anti-Discrimination Act. Noting that the Committee had received reports that there had been around 1,000 lawsuits initiated against human rights defenders and that some had been subjected to fines, he said he would like more information on the outcome of such lawsuits. It would be interesting to learn whether any investigations had been opened in response to the emergence of videos of police and politicians beating asylum-seekers or to accusations that the police had forcibly and illegally deported asylum-seekers arriving at the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

36. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that some respondents to the 2011 population census had reportedly stated that their ethnicity was Istrian. He would appreciate clarification as to whether Istria was simply a region and whether Istrian was considered to be an ethnicity.

37. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that, while she welcomed the increase in the State party's health insurance coverage for the Roma population, she would like to know whether any measures had been taken to increase coverage in northern Croatia, where it reportedly remained lower than in other regions. The Committee had received reports that mental health conditions were more often recorded among women than men but that men were twice as likely to be hospitalized for such conditions. The delegation was invited to offer an explanation and to outline any measures taken to address mental health conditions in women. It would be useful to know whether measures had been adopted to prevent health risks related to asthma, coronary heart disease and kidney disease, which had high incidence rates in the Roma community. She wished to know whether concrete and time-bound measures had been taken to improve access to reproductive health services for Roma women and girls.

38. **Mr. Payandeh** said that he would like to know whether the issue of racial profiling in police checks and searches, which was a problem in most countries, was acknowledged by and discussed in the State party.

The meeting was suspended at 4.25 p.m. and resumed at 4.45 p.m.

39. **A representative of Croatia** said that new legislation on population censuses had been adopted in 2020, and a census had been carried out in 2021. Inhabitants now could respond to the census questions online. According to the census, the population of Croatia in 2021 was 3,871,833, a decrease of almost 10 per cent compared with 2011, and there were just over 240,000 people from minority groups living in the country. The populations of all minority groups had decreased, apart from the Roma population, which had grown by 0.6 per cent since 2011.

40. The population census had been carried out using a self-administered online survey and interviews conducted in the field. In areas with large minority communities, a number of interviewers had been recruited from those communities, and others had been accompanied by a member of the community to ensure that the questions were understood. Questionnaires had been made available in minority languages. An awareness-raising campaign had been carried out to encourage participation in the census. Replies to the census questions on ethnicity, mother tongue and religion had been voluntary. Participants had been free to answer the question on ethnicity as they wished, and interviewers had been instructed to record answers exactly as given.

41. Many organizations representing minority communities had received government funding to participate in the preparation of the census and raise awareness of its importance. A Serbian organization had received over €13,000 and a Roma organization had received some €46,000 for that purpose. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics did not keep data on economic and social indicators. However, some data were available for the Roma population, as they had been gathered by academic researchers.

42. **A representative of Croatia** said that in 2017 and 2018 the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities had initiated comprehensive quantitative and qualitative research into the Roma population in the country. Data had been collected on nearly 5,000 members of the Roma community living in over 1,500 households, representing about 37.5 per cent of the Roma households recorded during a 2017 mapping exercise. That exercise had estimated the total Roma population throughout the country to be around 22,500. Some 91 per cent of Roma people had been born in Croatia, over 98 per cent held citizenship and 96.7 per cent spoke Croatian. Only 23 Roma persons were stateless. Most spoke Roma dialects with their family members. The majority of the Roma population were Catholic, with a minority being of Muslim or Christian Orthodox faith. The average Roma household was made up of 5.2 members, almost double the number for the general population. The Roma population was young, with an average age of 21.9 years; half the population were minors and only a quarter were over the age of 33 years.

43. **A representative of Croatia** said that in 2022 his country had received nearly 13,000 requests for asylum and international protection, of which about 60 per cent had been from men. The five most common countries of origin were Iraq, the Russian Federation, Burundi, Türkiye and Afghanistan. In the period from 2006 to 31 March 2023, asylum had been granted to 904 people, 64 per cent of whom were men, and subsidiary protection had been granted to 138 people. As at 4 August 2023, some 23,000 Ukrainian nationals had been granted temporary protection, and temporary and permanent stay permits had been granted to over 100,000 Ukrainians. Temporary and permanent stay permits had also been granted to a few dozen stateless persons and persons of unknown nationality, and two stateless persons had received long-term stay permits. From 2013 to 2022, 78 persons who had been stateless or of unknown nationality had obtained Croatian citizenship.

44. **Mr. Tahiri** (Croatia) said that a working group had been established in May 2023 to prepare a new action plan for the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination in 2024 and 2025. The group had 39 members, with 10 from civil society and representatives from all of the various offices of the Ombudsperson.

45. **A representative of Croatia** said that legislation on strategic planning and development had been adopted in 2017 and that the National Development Strategy had subsequently been adopted in 2021. Any other sectoral, regional or local strategies had to be aligned with the National Development Strategy. The legislation on strategic planning had introduced mandatory evaluations for national plans and strategies. The evaluations were conducted by independent experts, and their recommendations had to be taken into account in the drafting of new strategies and plans.

46. **A representative of Croatia** said that the National Development Strategy set out a list of indicators to be measured and that other strategic documents had to be aligned with those indicators. The National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination was the main policy document for human rights, but there were other relevant policy documents, including the National Plan for Roma Inclusion and a plan for the integration of third-country nationals. Most national policies, especially those addressing poverty and the situation of women and children, included measures benefiting the groups covered by the Convention.

47. The National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination had been developed through a consultative process. The National Plan contained 25 implementing measures, and one of its six key goals was combating discrimination, including racial discrimination. While evaluations of previous plans related to human rights had not been specifically cited in its development, all other available resources had been used, including European Union research, the research and recommendations of the Office of the Ombudsperson and the observations and recommendations of the Committee and other treaty bodies. European Union policy documents had also been taken into account. The final version of the National Plan had been approved by all stakeholders. A new plan was being developed with the involvement of a larger number of civil society organizations. A council on human rights, made up of government officials and members of civil society, was tasked with monitoring the National Plan's implementation.

48. **A representative of Croatia** said that, in January 2023, the Government had adopted new working definitions of antisemitism, holocaust denial and discrimination against members of the Roma community, and that all media service providers had been requested to use those working definitions in their reporting. In March 2023, the Croatian Football Federation had signed an agreement to intensify its efforts to combat racism, discrimination and antisemitism in football.

49. **A representative of Croatia** said that the Judicial Academy provided training on hate crime, hate speech and discrimination, among other topics, for prosecutors, judges and State attorneys, in line with its obligations arising from national strategies and action plans. In 2021 and 2022, it had held six workshops on promoting diversity and combating intolerance and hate crime. In 2023 it had held a number of online workshops on preventing hate crime, promoting the rule of law and upholding fundamental rights. A total of 249 judicial officials had participated in such training in 2018, 502 in 2019, 156 in 2020, 135 in 2021 and 194 in 2022.

50. Since 2014, the Judicial Academy had actively participated in the Council of Europe Programme on Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals. Its inclusion of an introductory course on the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) and the European Court of Human Rights in the mandatory training for trainee judicial officials had been recognized by the Council of Europe as an example of best practice. In 2023, the Judicial Academy was due to deliver at least two courses in line with the European Programme on Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals, as well as an online course for judges and court officials on the asylum system.

51. The National School for Public Administration provided training for civil servants on non-discrimination, gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities. Since 2018, nearly 900 civil servants had participated in 37 workshops, including one on the social integration of Roma persons.

52. **A representative of Croatia** said that non-discrimination featured prominently in capacity-building initiatives for civil servants funded by the European Union. Training for civil servants – delivered in cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsperson and other stakeholders – covered the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, among other topics. Non-discrimination coordinators, appointed in all institutions involved in managing European Union-funded programmes, served as focal points for all questions related to discrimination in the preparation and implementation of such programmes.

53. **A representative of Croatia** said that, in response to the high number of persons arriving from Ukraine, the Social Welfare Act had been amended in April 2022 to expand the scope of services available to persons under temporary protection. Under the amended Act, services could be granted to foreign nationals with permanent or long-term residence in Croatia; stateless persons with temporary, permanent or long-term residence in Croatia; foreign nationals under subsidiary protection; asylum-seekers and their family members; and foreign nationals who had been recognized as victims of human trafficking. Unaccompanied foreign children were provided with protection and assistance from the moment they were identified and for as long as necessary.

54. **A representative of Croatia** said that the Code of Ethics for Police Officers stated that every person had equal human rights and fundamental freedoms, regardless of their race, skin colour, sex, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, education or social standing. In addition, the Act on Police Affairs and Powers stated that within the police, the director and all supervisors were obliged to treat all officers equally, regardless of their race, political beliefs, gender, marital or family status, sexual orientation, age or ethnic origin. The police received extensive training on human rights and non-discrimination.

55. **Mr. Tahiri** (Croatia) said that the implementation of successive national action plans for Roma inclusion since 2003 had led to a marked improvement in the social status of Roma persons and had facilitated their access to education, health care, housing and employment.

56. **A representative of Croatia** said that the working group responsible for drafting the National Roma Inclusion Strategy had comprised representatives of the Government, the Roma community, civil society organizations, academia and the Office of the Ombudsperson. A greater number of civil society and Roma representatives had participated in drafting the latest strategy. The indicators for monitoring the outcomes of the latest strategy had been improved and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. National Roma inclusion strategies were drafted on the basis of thorough research and external evaluations of previous strategies.

57. **A representative of Croatia** said that the Croatian Employment Service continuously collected data to determine the number of unemployed persons belonging to the Roma national minority. It also provided advice and ran workshops exclusively for Roma persons and liaised with employers to improve their employment prospects. As a result of such efforts, the number of unemployed Roma persons had fallen from 3,534 at the end of 2021 to 3,282 at the end of 2022. They had accounted for 2.8 per cent of all unemployed persons.

58. **A representative of Croatia** said that over 1,000 Roma children were enrolled in kindergartens and over 5,000 in primary schools, split roughly evenly between boys and girls. Over 800 Roma students were enrolled in secondary education, with slightly more girls than boys. The number of Roma students in higher education had increased. For the current academic year, 51 Roma students had received scholarships from the Ministry of Science and Education. The number of Roma children enrolled in preschool programmes had also increased. The Government allocated funding to improve the schooling of Roma pupils and prevent dropout and had increased the level of funding from €1.1 million for 2013 to €2.3 million for 2023. The Ministry of Science and Education co-financed kindergarten and preschool programmes, provided language support for pupils with little or no knowledge of Croatian and funded after-school clubs, extracurricular activities and summer schools.

59. **Ms. Tlakula** said that she wished to know which specific indicators the State party used when compiling statistics. She also would like to learn how the State party had determined which civil society organizations should be represented on the recently formed Council for Human Rights. In addition, she would be grateful to receive information on the

total number of judges in Croatia so that she could establish whether a high enough proportion of them had received training from the Judicial Academy on subjects related to racism and racial discrimination.

60. She encouraged the delegation to provide information on the application of the Anti-Discrimination Act at the local level; the adoption of special measures within the meaning of article 1 of the Convention; the application of articles 125 and 325 of the Criminal Code, respectively concerning the violation of equality and public incitement to violence; and statistics on the complaints lodged with the courts and other national institutions concerning acts of racial discrimination, racist hate speech and racist hate crime. The Committee would also welcome information on the application of articles 56 and 87 of the Criminal Code, which addressed racist or xenophobic motivation and hate crimes as an aggravating circumstance, on the composition, mandate and activities of the working group for monitoring hate crimes and on the implementation of the recommendations made by GANHRI regarding the Office of the Ombudsperson.

61. **Mr. Balcerzak** said that he wished to have further information on the efforts made to eliminate the de facto segregation of Roma pupils in schools. He would also like to have the delegation's response to claims that the authorities had forcibly removed some 40 Roma persons, including 13 children, from their homes in Crikvenica, where that community had reportedly lived since the 1970s. He would like to know if that incident was illustrative of a wider problem and, if so, what measures the State party was taking to prevent such evictions in the future.

62. **Mr. Diaby** said that he was grateful for the information provided on anti-racism initiatives launched by the Croatian Football Federation. However, in the light of recent reports of a foreign footballer originally from an ethnic Serbian region of Croatia being subjected to hundreds of racist insults from fans of the Croatian national team, he would like to know whether the State party planned to introduce a specific law addressing such conduct at sports venues.

63. He wished to know whether an inquiry had been launched into allegations of police brutality committed in 2020 against asylum-seekers at the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additionally, he would like to know whether the Anti-Discrimination Act provided adequate protection for human rights defenders, many of whom had reportedly been ordered to pay thousands of euros in damages following the filing of lawsuits against them.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.