



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Distr.: General
2 April 2019

Original: English

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Twenty-first session

Summary record of the 440th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 14 March 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Basharu

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Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35*(continued)*

Initial report of Turkey (continued) (CRPD/C/TUR/1; CRPD/C/TUR/Q/1 and CRPD/C/TUR/Q/1/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Turkey took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 11–20

2. **Mr. Özdemir** (Turkey), responding to questions put at the previous meeting, said that, in accordance with an amendment made to the Criminal Code in 2014, any individual convicted of discriminating against a person with a disability would be liable to a prison sentence of between 6 months and 3 years. A bus driver had recently been punished for such an offence, and eight similar cases were due to come before the courts. When ruling on such cases, judges based their decisions on reports issued by doctors, statements made by witnesses and other information. The labour law had been amended to ensure that, in cases involving discrimination against persons with disabilities, the burden of proof fell on the persons accused of discriminatory practices.

3. Representatives of the Ministry of Justice had visited France in order to acquaint themselves with that country's practices in the area of guardianship. National legislation on guardianship was now being reviewed in the light of the information acquired and would be amended in due course.

4. Although judges were required to be capable of visiting any part of Turkey in order to interview the parties involved in legal proceedings, that requirement did not apply to lawyers or notaries. Legal professionals who acquired a disability were able to continue practising.

5. In 2005, legislative reforms had been carried out with a view to enhancing the accessibility of the justice system. In accordance with those reforms, lawyers, interpreters and other experts were appointed to represent and assist persons with disabilities involved in legal proceedings. Interpretation services were funded by the Government. In cases where a person with a disability was the victim of an offence, the disability in question was considered to be an aggravating circumstance. When persons with disabilities were unable to travel to a courthouse, the judge was required by law to visit their homes in order to take their statements. Videoconferencing technology was also used in such circumstances.

6. The Ministry of Justice was working to increase the accessibility of courthouses, including by introducing special entrances and Braille signs and reading materials. In the past five years, over 60 million Turkish liras had been allocated for that purpose. When submitting tenders for the construction of new courthouses, subcontractors were required to demonstrate that they would abide by accessibility standards.

7. During the previous two years, the victims' rights department had established special rooms in courthouses where vulnerable victims could give testimony with the support of experts. Steps were being taken to raise awareness of those rooms, and plans were in place to establish more of them around the country. The statistics department of the Ministry of Justice would shortly be able to produce data on victims, disaggregated by type of disability.

8. In accordance with an order issued by the Minister of Justice, legislative changes would be made to ensure that notaries were available at all times. Furthermore, once the necessary technical infrastructure was in place, persons with visual impairments would no longer be required to have two witnesses when making a statement before a notary.

9. Sign language interpreters assisted persons with disabilities in court and during the discussions preceding a trial. In order to ensure that such interpreters were as impartial as possible, they were required to take an oath. Given that defence lawyers could submit appeals based on errors allegedly made by sign language interpreters, it was essential to ensure that such interpreters provided services of the highest possible standard.

10. **Mr. Ulutaş** (Turkey) said that, since 2005, some 250 judges and prosecutors had travelled to Geneva in order to learn about legal mechanisms implemented abroad that could be applied to the Turkish legal system. Judges and prosecutors had also travelled to the European Court of Human Rights in order to learn about best practices. Enhancing access to justice for the country's large refugee population was a priority. The Government had conducted international seminars on the matter in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and members of the Government had visited international organizations to exchange information and speak about the measures taken in that regard. Since 2014, a regular one-week training session had been delivered to prosecutors and judges in order to promote a holistic approach to human rights within the judicial system. Staff from the Ministry of Justice had visited United Nations agencies to learn how international human rights instruments were implemented around the world.

11. **Mr. Yıldırım** (Turkey) said that the Directorate General of Services for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly had taken measures to promote home-based care for persons with disabilities, pursuant to legislative amendments adopted in 2010. To that end, experts visited the homes of persons with disabilities in order to identify and address their needs. At the same time, for those who had no family, care and rehabilitation services, along with various forms of therapy, could be provided in State care facilities. As part of his Government's efforts to offer better care, the physical infrastructure of care facilities was being improved.

12. The Government had developed a project to create accessible community centres and accessible home-based care centres for persons with disabilities. As part of that project, facilities were being built to provide persons with disabilities with rehabilitation services, hydrotherapy, occupational therapy and consultation services. Housing was allocated to persons with disabilities in order to promote their inclusion in the community. In conjunction with the World Health Organization, the Government had established a project aimed at enhancing the social inclusion of persons with disabilities and improving the quality of care provided in institutions and the home. Although acts of abuse were occasionally committed against persons of disabilities as in all countries, the perpetrators of those acts were immediately brought before the courts.

13. Persons with disabilities who lived with their families could, if necessary, be transferred to State care facilities on a temporary basis. Those who had no families received payments, as well as enjoying access to services at State care facilities. Currently, around 18,000 persons with disabilities received payments of over 3,000 Turkish liras per month. Persons with disabilities who lived with their families could attend day-care centres in order to relieve the burden of care on their family members. Institutional and residential care centres also provided day-care services to persons with disabilities. Young children with disabilities who lived with their families could attend free day-care centres every morning and receive free all-day childcare. Persons with visual impairments could participate in rehabilitation programmes and receive careers advice in order to promote their inclusion in society.

14. **Ms. Şahin** (Turkey) said that the services offered by the Ministry of Health were designed to take the needs of persons with different types of disability into account. Home-based services were provided to 1.3 million persons with disabilities across the country by over 2,000 care teams, comprising doctors, nurses and therapists. The services included physical, social and psychological support. The care teams were affiliated with State hospitals, where persons with disabilities could be referred for treatment if necessary. Approximately 180 community mental health centres established across the country's 81 provinces provided individual treatment plans for persons with intellectual or mental disabilities and support for their families.

15. **Ms. Yılmaz** (Turkey) said that airports could apply for an accessibility certificate from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. The requirements included accessible telephone lines, ramps, physically accessible customer service desks, signage in Braille and lifts. As of 2017, 38 Turkish airports had received certification. The Directorate, in cooperation with the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, had prepared a video with sign language interpretation on airport accessibility for persons with disabilities. In 2018, satisfaction surveys on accessibility, versions of which were also available in Braille, had

been conducted at airports across the country. The results had shown a modest improvement in satisfaction since the previous year.

16. Improvements to accessibility were also under way in the railway sector. In 2015, legislation had been passed requiring trains either produced in or imported to Turkey to comply with certain accessibility standards. All rail tenders and contracts had to meet the relevant criteria. Furthermore, several European Union directives on rail passenger rights had been incorporated into national law in 2017. Accessibility improvements, such as the introduction of ramps and dedicated parking spaces for persons with disabilities, had been made at nearly 900 train stations. Many stations had signs in Braille.

17. **Mr. Arslan** (Turkey) said that the European Parliament resolution of 8 February 2018 on the current human rights situation in Turkey, to which reference had been made at the previous meeting (CRPD/C/SR.439), was a politically motivated and prejudiced decision by an institution that took every opportunity to level false accusations against his country. It was very unfortunate that a Committee member had chosen to cite such an inaccurate source. He categorically rejected the unjust allegations of torture and ill-treatment, which, moreover, did not relate specifically to the rights of persons with disabilities. He believed that the Committee had been misinformed and the treaty body system exploited by certain groups for their own ends.

18. Turkey faced unprecedented challenges to its security and unity, and was under threat from several terrorist organizations. Nevertheless, the country continued to respect the universal values – human rights, democracy and the rule of law – that underpinned its Constitution. Turkey cooperated on an ongoing basis with the Committee against Torture, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and had received visits by those bodies even after the heinous coup attempt of July 2016. A national mechanism for the prevention of torture had been in place since 2012, and his Government had operated a zero-tolerance policy with regard to torture and ill-treatment since 2003. Moreover, the abolition of the statute of limitations for torture offences had made investigations more effective.

19. The terrorist organization behind the failed coup aimed to weaken and suppress all of the country's institutions, overthrow the Government and establish an oppressive totalitarian and theocratic system using violence, threats, blackmail and other unlawful means. It was responsible for the deaths of 251 people and for causing injuries to more than 2,300 Turkish citizens, most of whom had been disabled for life. Criminal proceedings brought against persons with disabilities did not constitute an act of discrimination when those persons were suspected to have links to terrorist organizations. Disability could not be used as a shield against criminal investigation. The legal rights of all persons involved were protected and the rule of law served as a firm guarantee that the related proceedings would be conducted in a fair manner.

20. **Mr. Kuz** (Turkey) said that the implementation of article 12 of the Convention posed a particular challenge. His Government had compiled a manual of best practice from around the world in respect of guardianship for persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, using funds from the European Union. The manual would be distributed to care centre staff and used in training courses. Ultimately, however, it aimed to replace guardianship with a better system.

21. Budgeting played an important role in improving accessibility. A separate budget line had been created to better reflect the level of expenditure on accessibility and to allow the effectiveness of spending to be monitored. Given that children with disabilities had specific needs in terms of accessibility, a study had been conducted in order to establish standards in that regard and, in 2017, a manual on accessibility for children had been drafted with funding from the European Union. Legislation had been introduced and regulations amended to further improve accessibility in urban planning.

22. **Mr. Vergil** (Turkey) said that there were some 4.7 million refugees and persons under temporary protection in the country. An open-door policy had been implemented in view of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. There were just under 2 million Syrian children of school age, 65 per cent of whom were enrolled in the Turkish education system.

Syrian refugees were entitled to health services, free of charge. No legal barriers prevented Syrian nationals from enjoying their rights; they were supplied with work permits and had access to legal aid. To date, 15,000 refugees had been relocated to the United States of America and Canada, and a further 20,000 had been resettled in European countries. Protection desks had been set up in 27 provinces to identify foreign nationals with special needs. Thus far, 25,000 persons with disabilities had been identified: approximately 9,000 were under 18 years of age, 14,000 were between the ages of 18 and 64, and 2,000 were aged 65 and over. They had the option of being placed in temporary shelters or care centres. They were also entitled to support from the social assistance and solidarity foundations. The Government had spent US\$ 37 billion on providing services to migrants.

23. Temporary protection laws had been translated into 11 languages and the website of the Directorate General of Migration Management was available in 6 languages. A helpline was also available in six languages 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All calls received an immediate response and the relevant institutions were contacted in order to provide assistance where needed. Vocational and language courses were provided free of charge to migrants. The Government was in the process of setting up migration counselling centres to inform migrants of their rights and freedoms. The information was available on a mobile application that had been released in April 2018 and translated into six languages. Integration meetings had been held since the start of 2019 in order to foster harmony between migrants and host communities and to tackle prejudice and misinformation.

24. **Mr. Ergüt** (Turkey) said that strategies were in place for the promotion of the rights of children with disabilities and women with disabilities and the prevention of violence. Over the previous 10 years, his Government had been working on removing children from institutions by promoting foster care, enhancing adoption services and providing financial support for families. The protection of children from violence and abuse was of paramount importance and extensive training was provided to raise awareness of the issue among institutions and organizations involved in childcare. Workshops on the privacy and rights of children had begun in 2017. Furthermore, innovative action had been taken, in coordination with relevant organizations, to protect children from digital risks, social media threats and printed material that might be harmful to them.

25. Identifying social risks was also important. A family social support programme had been established to ensure effective monitoring and assessment, and there were currently 189 family social support centres. Home visits were arranged to identify families' social service requirements and refer them to the best service points in their neighbourhood. As failure to report cases of abuse of children and women was a key challenge, a hotline had been created to receive complaints from victims and neighbours and to guarantee an immediate response. Complaints could be submitted in Arabic and Kurdish, as well as in Turkish, and also in sign language. Once victims were identified, psychosocial support was provided and measures were taken to prevent secondary traumatization. There were also child support centres with expert staff who provided assistance in line with children's age group and gender.

26. Following his country's ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, it had enacted Law No. 6284 on Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence against Women. The goals of the third National Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women were in line with that Convention. The capacity of organizations that provided services for women and girls with disabilities had been enhanced, and therapy and rehabilitation programmes catered for the specific needs of groups such as refugees or minors. Training seminars were organized under the National Action Plan in all provinces.

27. **Ms. Şahin** (Turkey) said that the accessible communication service launched in 2016 enabled deaf and hard-of-hearing persons to download applications to their mobile telephones and have access to experts in Ministry of Health centres so that they could be referred to the closest health centre, hospital or other service. Emergency hotlines, including that of the Ministry of the Interior, would be incorporated into the accessible mobile application so that they could be accessed by persons with all kinds of disability throughout the country.

28. The Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency had recently amended legislation to provide specifically for notification of persons with disabilities. In 2017, it had implemented a project in cooperation with civil society organizations aimed at organizing awareness-raising campaigns and establishing procedures for emergency notification of such persons. Measures to include visual and audio alarms for persons with disabilities in the national early warning system had recently been completed and would be spread throughout the country in the near future.

29. A law enacted in 1983 prohibited the sterilization of persons with disabilities. No one in Turkey could be sterilized or undergo an abortion without the person's consent or knowledge or in the absence of medical need. Medical decisions concerning abortion or sterilization of persons with or without disabilities must be supported by a court decision.

30. **The Chair** noted that the protection of persons with disabilities, which was addressed in articles 15, 16 and 17 of the Convention, was within the Committee's purview. Under rule 50 of its rules of procedure, the Committee was entitled to consider information from intergovernmental organizations and regional integration organizations that was relevant to its activities under the Convention; those activities included the consideration of State party reports.

Articles 21–33

31. **Ms. Utami** asked whether legislative and other measures had been taken in the State party to ensure that health care and services related to rare diseases, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections were accessible for persons with disabilities. She also wished to know what measures were taken to ensure that health services and treatment were gender-sensitive and provided on the basis of free and informed consent, and to guarantee access to affordable health insurance, life insurance and other related insurance for persons with disabilities in all age groups.

32. Although patients required lifelong health care for spina bifida, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis and other diseases, there were still not sufficient specialist units for the treatment of such conditions and the costs were frequently unaffordable. She wondered whether the State party had a service plan for persons with disabilities who needed special health-care services, including multidisciplinary clinics. She would welcome information about plans to improve the health of persons with disabilities and to enable them to benefit from public health programmes. She would also like to know whether the Government protected the privacy of patients' health-related information.

33. A person's per capita income must be significantly below the level of the minimum wage in order to exercise the right to a care and insolvency pension pursuant to Law No. 2828 and Law No. 2022. She asked whether the State party would consider amending that requirement on behalf of persons with disabilities, and whether it considered that an income of one third or two thirds of the minimum wage was adequate.

34. **Ms. Kim Mi Yeon** asked what measures had been taken by the State party to repeal legislation under the Civil Code and to end practices that denied persons with disabilities, especially persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities and women and girls with disabilities, their rights to marriage, family, adoption and parenthood on an equal basis with others, without discrimination and based on their free consent.

35. **Mr. Ishikawa** asked what measures were taken to provide assistive devices to persons with disabilities at an affordable cost. He also wished to know what action was being taken to increase the use of the Braille alphabet in all areas, and whether any evaluations had been conducted to ascertain whether devices provided by the All Seeing Eye project were useful for the target group. He asked whether the State party set web accessibility standards, whether the Government's website was accessible and how the Government promoted web accessibility in the private sector. He wondered what measures were in place to ensure that children with disabilities, especially refugees and asylum seekers and children in the eastern and south-eastern regions and rural areas, had adequate access to health care and education. Lastly, he would like to hear what steps were being taken to guarantee the right to a secret ballot for persons with disabilities and to restore the voting rights of persons with disabilities placed under guardianship.

36. **Mr. Buntan** asked how the Government ensured that the Strategic Plan of the Radio and Television Supreme Council, especially the provisions relating to accessibility of information and communications for persons with disabilities, could be enforced. He also wished to know what the legal status of sign language and Braille was in Turkey and whether the State party planned to ratify and speedily implement the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled.

37. While he commended the State party's policy of promoting an inclusive education system, he was concerned about the reported increase in the proportion of students with disabilities attending special education schools from 39 to 52 per cent. The establishment of sheltered workshops to support employment for persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities was not in line with the Convention. He wished to know whether the State party planned to move, in the foreseeable future, towards an open and inclusive employment situation for persons with all types of disability in which sufficient support, including reasonable accommodation, was provided.

38. He asked whether the disability civil society organizations mentioned by the State party complied with the definition of organizations of persons with disabilities contained in the Committee's general comment No. 7.

39. **Mr. Babu** said the Committee had been informed that about 42.3 per cent of persons with disabilities did not have access to education, even at primary school level. He therefore wished to know whether measures had been taken by relevant government departments to ensure compliance with Decree Law No. 573 on Special Education Services and to punish violators.

40. **Mr. Lovász** (Country Rapporteur) asked how many television channels were accessible for persons with visual and hearing impairments and to what extent. He also wished to know whether persons with disabilities encountered bias on the part of family service providers and whether any legal restrictions were imposed on persons with disabilities in respect of fostering. He would welcome information about measures to ensure that children who were bed dependent or used respiratory devices were included in general education. Lastly, he wondered whether there were any plans to promote the employment of women with disabilities.

The meeting was suspended at 11.50 a.m. and resumed at 12.10 p.m.

41. **Mr. Aslan** (Turkey) said that the Turkish Employment Agency was not the sole authority responsible for issues relating to the employment of women and vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. It cooperated with numerous public institutions and civil society organizations to support the employment and employability of persons with disabilities. The Agency's work was based on the targets set in the National Plan of Action and Strategy Paper on Employment and other documents, and it focused on an inclusive employment strategy rather than on sheltered workshops.

42. Some 385,000 persons with disabilities, including about 55,000 women, had been placed in public sector jobs since 2002, and about 210,000 persons with disabilities were currently employed in the public sector. Significant progress had also been made recently in the private sector. Employers were not compelled to employ individuals with disabilities but were encouraged to do so through many incentives, such as governmental coverage of 18 months of tax and social security costs. At the same time, criminal sanctions were imposed on parties that failed to comply with the obligation to employ a certain number of persons with disabilities. Vocational training and work experience had been provided since 2012 for more than 95,000 persons with disabilities, and many awareness-raising campaigns and projects had been implemented to increase their employability. The budget allocated for the purpose in recent years was about 130 million Turkish liras. As part of a supported employment initiative for women, a group of staff from the Turkish Employment Agency had been trained to work as job coaches. Since 2012, more than 1.2 million hours of job counselling had been provided to more than 562,000 persons with disabilities.

43. **Ms. Şahin** (Turkey) said that Turkey had been among the first countries to ensure that the cost of therapies for such ailments as multiple sclerosis was covered by its health insurance system. Vaccination rates were closely monitored.

44. Community-based mental health centres provided free services to Syrian refugees. A project under way in nine provinces was feeding into the development of new legislation on the needs of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Health personnel providing services to refugees worked in coordination with the migration authorities, and reproductive health services were provided to refugees with and without disabilities.

45. A department of the Ministry of Health was responsible for working with civil society organizations active in the area of reproductive health. One area of cooperation in that regard involved the development of material accessible to blind persons and persons with other visual impairments. Cooperation with the European Union in respect of sexual and reproductive health programmes was standard practice. In addition, the Turkish authorities were working with the World Health Organization to ensure that persons with disabilities, including people who were deaf or hard of hearing, were provided with information on sexual and reproductive health.

46. Since 1998, the confidentiality of medical records, including for persons with disabilities, had been guaranteed by law. Medical personnel received ongoing training on patients' rights. Information on that topic had been provided in more accessible formats, such as videos, so that persons with disabilities were aware of the import of the consent and other forms they would be asked to provide. Procedures for the provision of informed consent by deaf or blind persons were the subject of specific regulation. Health personnel received training in the basics of sign language.

47. **Mr. Koç** (Turkey) said that children in Turkey, including refugees, were vaccinated free of charge. Vaccination campaigns and follow-up by general practitioners had made it possible to eradicate a number of diseases. Prenatal screenings were common, as was post-birth follow-up. For rare diseases, the latest therapies were offered free of charge.

48. **Mr. Köksal** (Turkey) said that, in Turkey, the special educational needs of persons with disabilities were viewed holistically, with a focus on inclusive education and training. The importance of inclusive education was stressed in the recently adopted 2023 Education Vision. Teachers working with students with disabilities would undergo specific training and be given additional support.

49. Of the slightly more than 373,000 students with disabilities in Turkey, approximately 271,000 were in inclusive schools, while some 51,000 were in special education facilities. Homeschooling services were provided for students with disabilities who were unable to attend school. Such students followed the same curriculum as their peers in school. Teleconference equipment was being set up to provide additional resources for students receiving their schooling at home. It was expected to be in place by 2020.

50. Steps were being taken to address learning disabilities such as dyslexia. Teaching materials suitable for children with such disabilities were being developed, for example, and as early diagnosis of those disabilities was critical, efforts were being made to raise awareness among parents and teachers.

51. Children in rural areas were provided with free transport to the nearest school. By law, a child with a disability, even only one such child, was entitled to a special education teacher. Syrian refugees with disabilities who were of school age received support from their teachers, who also acted as counsellors and cooperated with relevant experts on the design of activities to help those refugees overcome the obstacles they faced. Teacher training in that regard was ongoing.

52. Textbooks in Braille were provided at no cost to the students who needed them. A trial in one province, which had involved the provision of new books in Braille, would shortly be extended to the entire country. Considerable efforts were being made, including as part of a campaign overseen by the country's First Lady, to ensure that accessible instructional material was available in all schools.

53. The rates at which children with disabilities attended school were rising by the year. One of the main targets of Education Vision 2023 was to develop a national screening model to ensure that children's special educational needs were properly identified. Emphasis would be placed on identifying such needs early and offering educational programmes tailored to the specific requirements of each student.

54. **Mr. Okurer** (Turkey) said that, under the Constitution, elections were free and fair, and the ballot was secret. All persons were equal before the law. In September 2010, the Constitution had been amended to state that no measures taken to protect the rights of persons with disabilities would be deemed contrary to the principle of equality before the law. Persons with disabilities were entitled by law to accommodations that allowed them to vote freely. They were not required to wait in line to cast their ballots, for instance, and some had the right to be accompanied into the voting booth by a guardian. Polling officers, however, were not allowed to accompany a voter with a disability into the voting booth or otherwise interfere with that person's exercise of his or her right to vote.

55. **Mr. Buntan** said that he wished to know what degree of independence the newly established Ombudsman Institution enjoyed, whether it operated in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and whether it involved persons with disabilities in the activities it undertook to monitor the State party's compliance with its human rights obligations. He also wished to know what measures, such as the provision of technical or financial support, the State party took to enable persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to participate in the Institution's work.

56. **Mr. Schefer** said that he wondered whether the Turkish authorities had data, broken down by gender, occupation and form of disability, on the number of persons with disabilities who had been dismissed from public service in the wake of the failed coup of July 2016. He also wondered whether they had data, broken down by gender and form of disability, on the number of persons with disabilities whose social benefits had been terminated or restricted after the attempted coup.

57. **Ms. Gamio Ríos** asked what steps the State party was planning to take to change the attitudes of the private insurers that refused to insure persons with disabilities. As blind persons were sometimes required to have witnesses during their dealings with health-care personnel, she wished to know whether a mechanism had been put in place to monitor respect for patients' rights in such situations.

58. **Mr. Alsaif** said that he would welcome information on any measures taken by the State party to ensure that persons with disabilities were involved in international cooperation, including with international non-governmental organizations.

59. **The Chair** said that the Committee would welcome answers in writing, submitted within 48 hours, to the questions asked by the four preceding Committee members.

60. **Mr. Koç** (Turkey) said that Turkey, in coordination with civil society, was making every effort to ensure that an approach to disability based on human rights was taken throughout the country. The period under review had been relatively brief, but during that time a number of major steps to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities had been taken. Under the country's health insurance system, for example, all persons, including persons with disabilities, were entitled to free health care.

61. As the Government wished to make it possible for persons with disabilities to participate actively in all spheres of life, every effort was made to eliminate the discrimination and the obstacles they faced. Although there was still ground to cover in that regard, considerable progress had been made.

62. The Convention was an important tool for the Turkish authorities, not least because it provided them with a means of promoting the advancement of persons with disabilities. A comprehensive approach to disability had been taken, involving mainstreaming disability issues and awareness-raising, and, since 2012, the country had been moving away from the medical model of disability. Legislation on persons with disabilities had been amended to bring it into line with the Convention.

63. The Government's view was that persons with disabilities in Turkey should be free to make their own decisions about their lives. Although much remained to be done – improving data collection, for example – that view was clearly reflected in government policy.

64. **Mr. Lovászy**, noting the fruitfulness of the State party's dialogue with the Committee, said that he hoped the State party, in close consultation with organizations of and for persons with disabilities, would give all due consideration to the recommendations that would be made by the Committee in its concluding observations.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.