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Summary record of the 3rd meeting*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 13 February 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Saran (Vice-Chair)

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Ms. Saran (Vice-Chair) took the Chair.

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

Consideration of reports

(a) Reports submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant

Sixth periodic report of Romania (E/C.12/ROU/6; E/C.12/ROU/Q/6; E/C.12/ROU/RQ/6)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Romania joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Romania** said that the previous few years had been challenging owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the illegal war of aggression conducted by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Both crises had required urgent, wide-ranging action to address their immediate and medium-term effects on human rights. Following the onset of the pandemic, the Government had sought to support the health, well-being and economic needs of the population through technological solutions. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, more than 7 million Ukrainian citizens had crossed the border into Romania. To meet their basic needs, more than €650 million had been allocated from the State budget and by international partners, more than 20 laws had been amended and more than 1,500 local authorities had provided direct support to Ukrainian refugees.
3. In the area of combating discrimination, in May 2021 the Government had adopted the first national strategy and action plan for preventing and combating antisemitism, xenophobia, radicalization and hate speech. In 2022, a mechanism had been introduced under the new National Roma Inclusion Strategy to ensure inter-institutional cooperation and an integrated approach to the social inclusion of Roma. The International Labour Organization Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) was in the process of being ratified. In addition, the authorities had developed a guide to concrete measures that could be taken by public and private entities to combat workplace harassment.
4. Ensuring a decent standard of living was a cross-cutting theme in all national policies. Two national strategies, on social inclusion and poverty reduction and on social inclusion of homeless persons, had been adopted in 2022. Following the introduction of the National Strategy for Long-Term Care and Active Ageing, a network of 71 new day-care and recovery centres for older persons would be created. The 2023–2027 strategy for the protection of children’s rights was aimed at developing integrated services to support children who were living in situations of poverty or social exclusion.
5. In 2023, new legislation had been adopted on undergraduate and higher education, with the aim of creating a safe and inclusive educational environment in which every student’s rights and needs were respected. Measures would be taken to improve the quality of education and learning outcomes by focusing on functional literacy and digital skills, to ensure equal opportunities and the provision of support for students who belonged to disadvantaged groups or who were at risk of dropping out, and to transform technical and vocational education.
6. The new National Health Strategy was focused on addressing negative trends including reduced birth rates, shorter life expectancy, high levels of preventable deaths and the suboptimal performance of the health-care system. It was complemented by a sectoral strategy for preventing and monitoring HIV infections and a national action plan to combat cancer.
7. In the fight against corruption, the measures being taken had been adapted to the current challenges, including corruption in the health and environment sectors. The country’s goal set out in its long-term strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions was to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. In January 2023, Romania had adopted its first National Strategy on Environmental and Climate Change Education.
8. **Ms. Lemus de Vásquez** (Country Rapporteur) said that she wished to understand the legal status that was accorded to the Committee’s concluding observations in the State party. It would be helpful to know how the authorities raised awareness of the Covenant among

lawyers, judges and human rights defenders. She would be interested to hear about any steps being taken to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Covenant, as well as about any obstacles that had been encountered in that regard.

9. More details would be welcome regarding the mandate of the Romanian Institute for Human Rights in the area of promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights and any related cases that the Institute had taken up. It was unclear whether the Institute received sufficient financial resources for its operations. She would appreciate an account of the measures taken to strengthen the Institute's independence, impartiality and operational effectiveness and to ensure that it met the requirements of the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). An update would be welcome on the progress made in the Institute's accreditation under those Principles. She would be grateful for clarification of the extent to which the Institute coordinated its work with that of the National Council for Combating Discrimination.

10. The Committee was keen to receive more information on the scope, goals and expected results of the National Strategy on Environmental and Climate Change Education. It would also welcome an update on the revision of the National Energy Climate Plan and on the results thereof.

11. With regard to the use of the maximum available resources, she wished to know what measures had been taken to increase public spending as a percentage of gross domestic product and to ensure greater transparency and administrative capacity in budgetary allocations.

12. She would be grateful for details of any corruption cases that had been investigated and brought to trial each year and of the sentences imposed on the perpetrators. It would be useful to know what measures were being taken to combat corruption in the private sector and to tackle illicit financial flows. It would also be helpful to know what concrete measures had been taken to strengthen the role of the National Integrity Agency and provide it with sufficient resources, including financial resources.

13. In the area of inequality, she would welcome information on the measures being taken to promote greater equality between the regions and between urban and rural areas, to provide greater administrative support to the less developed regions and to increase the effectiveness of investments.

14. The Committee was eager to hear about the concrete steps being taken to tackle structural discrimination against the Roma population in the light of the challenges that had been identified in the application of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy. It would be particularly interested to learn of any action being taken to improve access to the labour market and to social housing for the Roma population, as well as to improve data collection. Details would be welcome of any improvements that had been made to the mechanisms designed to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Strategy.

15. She would appreciate information on the steps that were being taken to give effect to the judgment issued by the European Court of Human Rights on 19 January 2021 in the case of *X and Y v. Romania* (applications No. 2145/16 and No. 20607/16), in connection with recognition of the gender identity of two transgender persons. She would also be grateful for details of the training provided to judicial and administrative officials working on gender identity issues.

16. She wished to know what the authorities were doing to promote the representation of women in decision-making positions in the public and private sectors and to address the gender gap in the labour market.

The meeting was suspended at 10.25 a.m. and resumed at 10.35 a.m.

17. **A representative of Romania** said that the principles and values set forth in the Covenant were reflected in the national legal arsenal, including the Constitution. The legislation governing economic, social and cultural rights formed part of the Government's review programme within the framework of its accession to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

18. Before the Optional Protocol to the Covenant could be ratified, further consultation was required to ensure that any individual communications could be dealt with in a coordinated, efficient and effective manner.

19. The Office of the Ombudsman was an autonomous and independent public authority created pursuant to the Constitution. Its mandate covered all human rights, with a particular focus on individual rights in the areas of, inter alia, social protection, families, health and education. The Romanian Institute for Human Rights was an independent body under parliamentary control and was tasked with awareness-raising through reports, studies and training. Both the Office and the Institute had requested accreditation as national human rights institutions in accordance with the Paris Principles. The Government called for the identification of a formula that would allow national institutions to meet the accreditation requirements while simultaneously maximizing the cooperation between them.

20. **A representative of Romania** said that the National Council for Combating Discrimination was an equality body under parliamentary control. It had the power to adopt legally binding decisions and apply sanctions in cases of discrimination. The Council worked in partnership with the Romanian Institute for Human Rights, which had the authority to submit complaints to the Council.

21. When the Council took on cases, it drew on three sources of law, namely international law, including the Covenant, regional law and domestic law. Judges, prosecutors, police officers and public officials were provided with training on how to interpret and apply the Covenant.

22. **A representative of Romania** said that police officers, social workers, judges, prosecutors and outreach workers received training on how to manage situations of sexual violence. In 2022 and 2023, more than 900 police officers had been trained on topics including the issuance and enforcement of temporary protection orders.

23. During the previous five years, decision-making positions in the central public administration had been occupied by men and women in approximately equal proportions. The National Strategy on the Promotion of Gender Equality and Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence for 2022–2027 set out a series of measures, including the use of quotas, with the aim of improving women’s participation in decision-making processes. The National Agency for Equal Opportunities had organized awareness-raising campaigns and a series of seminars to promote gender equality.

24. **A representative of Romania** said that new legislation adopted in 2021 contained definitions of anti-Roma attitudes and anti-Roma organizations. The National Roma Inclusion Strategy included comprehensive measures aimed at combating discrimination and hate speech directed against Roma and promoting awareness of the contribution of the Roma population to Romanian society. Romania was the only member of the European Union that had two national institutions with responsibility for Roma affairs.

25. **A representative of Romania** said that the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity used State and European Union funds to improve social services and reduce inequalities between rural and urban areas. State-funded initiatives included a programme of national interest to develop public and private social services for 5,400 vulnerable older persons in rural areas and small towns with a population of up to 20,000. As at December 2023, 71 different services had been established under the programme. European Union funds had been invested in projects to promote social inclusion, strengthen community services and reduce poverty among marginalized groups, including the Roma community. Examples included a project to bolster the technical and administrative capacity of the social care network and another to provide integrated community services, including day and home care and adaptive social housing, in 149 vulnerable rural and small urban communities to prevent or reduce poverty and social exclusion.

26. **A representative of Romania** said that, through its local development programmes, the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration redistributed tax revenue by allocating more funds to county authorities with lower budgets. Data on authorities’ income and expenditure had been publicly available for over 20 years and included figures disaggregated by expenditure type. A code of administrative procedure was being developed

to govern administrative acts and contracts, facilitate citizens' access to public administration services and increase the efficiency and transparency of public institutions.

27. **A representative of Romania** said that the National Strategy on Environmental Education and Climate Change 2023–2030, adopted in January 2023, promoted the greening of both formal and non-formal education, human resources and teacher training, among other areas. The Strategy set out four main objectives: implementing an environmental and climate education programme; creating and using educational resources; rehabilitating infrastructure for sustainable schools; and training human resources involved in environmental and climate change education. The Strategy provided for the establishment of a network of green schools, to be supported financially through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. A framework methodology on the organization and functioning of the schools, adopted in June 2022, provided for measures to ensure sustainable school infrastructure and the teaching of content on climate and the environment in all years of study. The innovative “Green Week” programme, introduced during the 2022/23 academic year, involved the organization of activities related to climate change and the environment on five consecutive working days across a four-month window.

28. **A representative of Romania** said that the overwhelming majority of domestic judgments rendered subsequent to the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *X and Y v. Romania* had applied European standards and had not made gender recognition conditional on having undergone gender reassignment surgery. Relevant national authorities had conducted a working visit to Portugal to study the country's legal gender recognition procedure. In 2022, the Ombudsman's Institution, the non-governmental organization (NGO) ACCEPT and the Office of the Prosecutor-General had set up a working group to implement European Court of Human Rights rulings on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons in Romania. The group was composed of stakeholders including representatives of government institutions and NGOs.

29. **A representative of Romania** said that the working group had been established as part of a two-year project running from December 2021 to November 2023. Under the project, entitled “Partnership for the equality of LGBTI persons: implementation of European Court of Human Rights jurisprudence on sexual orientation and gender identity”, more than 500 judges, prosecutors and police officers had received training on the Court's relevant case law. The project, which had proved highly successful, had also involved the training of trainers in the justice system and police training modules on handling hate crimes against LGBTI persons.

30. **The Chair**, drawing attention to paragraph 25 of the Committee's concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Romania (E/C.12/ROU/CO/3-5), asked what progress the State party had made in gradually increasing its official development assistance with a view to achieving the international commitment of 0.7 per cent of its gross national product.

31. **Ms. Lee** (Country Task Force) said that she would appreciate information on the levels of income and wealth inequality in the State party, as requested in paragraph 5 (b) and (c) of the list of issues in relation to the sixth periodic report of Romania (E/C.12/ROU/Q/6). Moreover, given the persistently high levels of economic inequality in the country, she wished to know whether there were plans to introduce a progressive income tax system and differentiated value-added tax rates.

32. **Mr. Fiorio Vaesken** asked which national institution was responsible for following up on and implementing recommendations received from the human rights treaty bodies and whether the State party's periodic report had been submitted for comments to representatives of minorities prior to its adoption by the Government.

33. **Ms. Rossi** said that she would be grateful for a comparison of the scope of direct and indirect taxes, together with an indication of whether income and wealth taxes were progressive, whether special taxes were levied on large companies and multinationals, whether tax incentives were in place to encourage the transition from fossil fuels to cleaner energy sources and whether an analysis had been carried out of the redistributive impact of the tax system in Romania. She would also welcome information on the extent of tax avoidance and evasion, particularly among high earners and large companies and

multinationals, and on any measures taken to recognize and redistribute women's non-remunerated work, for example by increasing the availability of affordable childcare and fostering men's participation in domestic duties.

34. **A representative of Romania** said that, through the Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation, the Government was gradually implementing a commitment to increase its official development assistance to 0.33 per cent of gross national income (GNI) by 2030. In 2022, such assistance had amounted to 0.14 per cent of GNI. The collective commitment undertaken as a European Union member State to provide 0.7 per cent of GNI as official development assistance was a longer-term objective. The country's assistance was channelled mainly through bilateral and multilateral projects related to climate change, equal opportunities, education, the integrated management of river-sea systems, coastal hazards and forestry. Romania had contributed to the Green Climate Fund and had financed projects in countries including Kenya and Nigeria to promote education for women and girls. State-funded scholarships were awarded to students from African and Middle Eastern countries through specific programmes and to doctoral and postdoctoral researchers through the Eugen Ionescu programme. Regardless of budgetary difficulties, the Government was intent on honouring its commitments on official development assistance. Pursuant to a recently concluded partnership agreement, 14.7 per cent of that assistance would be devoted to African countries.

35. The standard corporate income tax rate in Romania was 16 per cent. However, as of 1 January 2024, credit institutions were required to pay an additional turnover tax at the rate of 2 per cent in 2024 and 2025 and 1 per cent from 2026 onwards, while companies registering a turnover in excess of €50 million were obliged to pay corporate income tax at the level of the minimum turnover tax, provided that the latter was higher. Legal entities carrying out activities in the oil and gas sectors with a turnover exceeding €50 million in the previous year had to pay an additional turnover tax at the rate of 0.5 per cent of turnover. In 2017, the standard personal income tax rate had been reduced from 16 per cent to 10 per cent. Income from gambling was taxed at between 3 and 40 per cent, depending on the amount received, while income from property transactions was taxed at between 1 and 3 per cent, depending on the length of time for which the property had been owned. Since 1 January 2017, the standard value-added tax rate had been set at 19 per cent, although specific goods and services such as food products, firewood and winter heating services for certain categories of consumers were taxed at lower rates of either 9 or 5 per cent.

36. **A representative of Romania** said that Romania had more than 20 years of experience of successfully implementing anti-corruption strategies, a track record recognized by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2021–2025 had been developed on the basis of broader consultations than previous iterations and was supported by a strong monitoring mechanism. In 2023, a total of 34 peer review missions had been conducted by teams of independent experts to evaluate and facilitate an exchange of best practices on the implementation of institutional transparency and anti-corruption measures. In addition, there were five platforms for cooperation that met biannually to address issues under the Strategy, and two working groups had been established to focus specifically on education and health. The eight health-related measures under the Strategy were already considered to have been either partially or fully implemented. In September 2023, Romania had joined the OECD Working Group on Bribery in International Business Transactions, a testament to the progress it had made in that domain. That same month, the European Commission had formally closed the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism for Bulgaria and Romania upon satisfactory implementation of all the specific commitments listed in the conclusions of the Mechanism's reports.

37. The National Anti-Corruption Directorate and the National Integrity Agency had indicated that they had sufficient funds and had consistently been granted additional resources upon request. Around 86 per cent of prosecutor positions at the Directorate were currently filled, and an extra 90 positions had been allocated for support activities. Between 1 July 2022 and 31 December 2023, the Directorate had investigated 5,235 cases of suspected corruption, including 409 in the health sector.

38. **A representative of Romania** said that the Government had approved the “Neutral Romania 2050” scenario aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, it was funding several complementary environmental initiatives, including the National Rural Development Programme, the National Integrated Urban Development Strategy for Resilient, Green, Inclusive and Competitive Cities and the restructuring and decarbonization of the Oltenia Energy Complex. Of the funds available under the Plan, 40 per cent, or €12–13 billion, had been allocated to the green transition.

39. Romania had the administrative capacity in its ministries to green the economy. A strategic, synergic effort was being made to adapt to climate change through legislation setting strategic objectives for the industrial and agricultural sectors with regard to water, forests, biodiversity, public health, air quality, environmental awareness transport, tourism and even insurance. Environmental protection also encompassed measures to combat corruption related to environmental crime. The Office of the Attorney General cooperated with civil society to monitor the implementation of measures to combat such crime.

40. **A representative of Romania** said that regional disparities were decreasing thanks to the Cohesion Policy and other policies based on the principle that nowhere should be left behind. Since 2015, a total of €23 billion had been spent on infrastructure and services to reduce territorial inequality. Over €4 billion had been allocated to the Inclusion and Social Dignity Programme that was designed to cover the social protection needs of older persons, children and persons with disabilities in marginalized communities in both urban and rural areas. The website of the Ministry for Development, Public Works and Administration published data only on income, life expectancy, access to general services, the employment rate and the turnover of companies in different areas.

41. **A representative of Romania** said that, to improve the work-life balance of a couple, parents were equally entitled to draw the child-raising allowance, provided that they had been in paid employment for twelve months in the two years preceding the child’s birth. They would be compensated for loss of income for two years, or for three years in the case of a child with disability. A minimum and a maximum level had been set for that compensation. Parents were each entitled to the same amount of parental leave.

42. **Ms. Lee** said that she would like to know whether and how the share of young people not in education, employment or training in the 15–29 years age group had changed following the implementation of measures to promote employment opportunities for young people. She would welcome the relevant data, disaggregated by age, sex and rural or urban areas. It would be helpful to have detailed information on the impact of the measures taken to promote access to decent work for members of the Roma community, including statistical data disaggregated by sex and age. The Committee would like to have information on the share of persons with disabilities employed in the open labour market, in both the public and the private sectors, out of the total number of persons with disabilities of working age and on whether and how the obligation of reasonable accommodation had been implemented. Information on employment measures to increase women’s access to decent work, including any measures to expand early childcare and education, would also be welcome.

43. The Committee would be grateful for information on the methods and procedures used in determining the minimum wage to ensure that it provided a decent living for workers and their families. It would like to have a description of measures taken to address the problem of in-work poverty and measures to ensure a fair remuneration for those in non-standard forms of work, including self-employed persons in agricultural areas. It would be grateful for an assessment of the impact of the National Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health 2018–2020, and other specific measures to reduce the high rate of fatal accidents at work.

44. She wished to know what measures the State party had taken to review the restrictive minimum membership requirement for forming a trade union. The delegation was also requested to provide information on measures taken to ensure that workers engaged in non-standard forms of work and self-employed persons could exercise the right to organize and join a trade union. The Committee would appreciate information on measures taken to strengthen sanctions in cases of anti-union discrimination in order to ensure their effectiveness and dissuasiveness.

45. She wished to receive information on measures to increase the coverage and adequacy of the guaranteed minimum income or the new Minimum Inclusion Income. It would be helpful to have information on the number of registered unemployed persons who had received unemployment benefits over the previous five years and on measures to increase the minimum level of unemployment benefit. The Committee would welcome information on measures taken to establish a clear indexation procedure for the reference social indicator to ensure that it was in line with the poverty threshold and the minimum net wage. The State party was requested to say whether it planned to increase public expenditure to increase the coverage and adequacy of social benefits. Lastly, the Committee wished to know who could access medical assistance and whether it was confined to emergency care.

46. **A representative of Romania** said that all the policies and strategies implemented by the Ministry of Labour sought to ensure social inclusion, above all through the Minimum Inclusion Wage, which had been introduced in the current year. It was also a priority in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, and the reorganized benefit system. The Minimum Inclusion Wage, which comprised two components – assistance to families and assistance to persons at risk of energy poverty – had replaced the guaranteed minimum income and the family allowance. Social protection complemented employment, education and health benefits and was based on needs assessment. The reference social indicator was indexed on the average annual inflation rate of the previous year to ensure a higher and more extensive level of social protection for vulnerable persons. Increasing the indicator's value every year would influence the amount of other social benefits. The underlying ideas were to ensure an adequate, efficient, sustainable social assistance system, to foster the social inclusion of families and vulnerable persons, to encourage their participation in the labour market and to address inequalities.

47. **A representative of Romania** said that labour inspectors' checks on compliance with health and safety regulations had led to a drop in fatal accidents from 323 in 2013 to 99 in 2023. Similarly, accidents resulting in disability had fallen from 89 to 63 over the same period. Some 100 labour inspections were conducted every year.

48. **A representative of Romania** said that the National Strategy for Employment 2021–2027 included targeted measures to increase the employment potential of young people, including those not in education, employment or training. Under a vocational training programme, partnerships had been set up between public employment services and youth services. Mobile teams offered career guidance, training, social assistance and health services. Young people could acquire a broad range of skills and qualifications to enable them to face the challenges of the future. Apprenticeships and industrial internships formed part of the programme, and the young people on the schemes received financial support to cover a variety of expenses related to their training. The entrepreneurial potential of young people was fostered by mentoring or counselling, exchanges with young Romanians from the diaspora, business incubators and the awarding of grants for start-ups.

49. **A representative of Romania** said that, under Law No. 367/2022 on Social Dialogue, unemployed persons were allowed to join a trade union. Trade unions could be set up in firms with as few as 10 employees. Employees were allowed to strike to protest against the Government's social and economic policy. Firms employing at least 10 persons were obliged to engage in collective bargaining. Fines ranging from 20,000 to 25,000 lei could be imposed if employers, employers' organizations or public authorities interfered in the process of setting up a trade union or selecting workers' representatives, or if they obstructed the election of trade union officials. Specific rules governed the right to strike of civil servants, military personnel, police, workers in essential services, judges and prosecutors.

50. **A representative of Romania** said that, in pursuance of Law No. 448/2006 on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Disabled Persons, if public authorities and institutions and public or private legal persons with at least 50 employees failed to respect their obligation to ensure that 4 per cent of their staff were persons with disabilities, they were required to pay to the State budget a monthly amount representing the gross minimum basic salary multiplied by the number of jobs in which they should have employed persons with disabilities. Alternatively, they could pay at least 50 per cent of the above-mentioned amount to the State budget and make up the difference through the purchase of goods or services produced by persons with disabilities in authorized sheltered workshops. The

national defence and security forces were exempt from that rule, as were organizations that sold the goods and services produced by persons with disabilities, provided that 75 per cent of the profits were ploughed back into socio-professional integration programmes for persons with disabilities. In 2023, over 390 sheltered workshops had employed nearly 1,700 persons with disabilities. The general objective of the National Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was to secure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities based on freedom of decision in all areas of life in an accessible and resilient environment. The National Strategy had eight priority areas closely aligned with the priority areas of the European Union Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, one of which was employment. The National Authority for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities was planning several projects to increase the employment of persons with disabilities who were difficult to employ and to develop the entrepreneurship skills of persons with disabilities who wanted to set up a sheltered workshop. Some €59 million had been allocated to boosting the employment of persons with disabilities, including through the provision of a barrier-free environment and better access to assistive technologies.

51. **A representative of Romania** said that the minimum wage had increased by more than 250 per cent over the previous 10 years, to 3,300 lei per month, representing around 44 per cent of the average gross salary. Following negotiations with the social partners, it would rise to 3,700 lei in July 2024. The first 200 lei of the minimum wage was not taxed, and there were tax credits for large families where both parents earned the minimum wage.

52. **A representative of Romania** said that persons in vulnerable situations in rural and urban areas benefited from policies and benefits that afforded them decent living conditions, coordinated by the National Agency for Payments and Social Inspection. Local bodies provided information on the eligibility criteria for those benefits.

53. **A representative of Romania** said that tailored services, such as mediation and information services and professional counselling, were provided as part of a programme intended to increase employment rates in the Roma community. As a result, almost 2,000 persons had found employment in 2022, of whom almost 1,400 had been hired on indefinite contracts. Similar results had been seen in 2023. Additionally, around 12,000 persons had been reached by employment incentive programmes in 2022. Where possible, action plans targeting the Roma included indicators that could be disaggregated by age and sex, and the ministries responsible for those plans ensured that beneficiaries' age and sex were reflected in targets, indicators and budgets.

54. **A representative of Romania** said that emergency medical assistance was provided to all, and persons without insurance received a minimum package of medical services, including basic primary health care.

55. **The Chair** said that she wished to know whether the measures adopted to strengthen trade union rights had been evaluated, whether legislation would be amended to allow asylum-seekers to obtain work permits during their first year in the State party and whether the allowances granted to them were sufficient to cover their basic needs.

56. **Ms. Lee** said that it would be useful to know how the State party analysed the causes of its high rates of in-work poverty. She would welcome confirmation that the number of fatal workplace accidents had decreased from 229 in 2016 to 99 in 2023 and, if those figures were correct, information on how that decrease had been brought about. Clarification was also required as to whether unemployment benefits would increase annually in line with inflation and the minimum wage.

57. **Ms. Rossi** said that the Committee would appreciate information on the requirements for access to social security benefits for persons with disabilities and the scope of those benefits, including whether they covered the additional costs of services linked to disability. She also wished to know how persons with disabilities had access to health benefits.

58. **A representative of Romania** said that trade union leaders had received training on managing discrimination cases. The effectiveness of the measures adopted to protect trade unions and workers from discrimination was illustrated by the high number of sanctions imposed in such cases and the effective remedies granted by the courts.

59. **A representative of Romania** said that asylum-seekers whose asylum applications were being processed could access the labour market on an equal footing with Romanian citizens three months after submitting their applications. The allowances granted to them, which had been increased in 2022, were determined using research into food and clothing requirements and individual needs.

60. **A representative of Romania** said that early years education had been prioritized in the comprehensive reforms under way in the education system and was the subject of a dedicated chapter in new legislation on education. An integrated community services programme linked education to social assistance and health interventions with the aim of increasing enrolment.

61. **A representative of Romania** said that workers on low incomes could receive benefits.

62. **A representative of Romania** said that the significant fall in the number of workplace accidents could perhaps be explained by increased monitoring in high-risk sectors, such as construction and agriculture, as identified by an analysis of all economic sectors that was also used to define the Labour Inspectorate's annual framework programme for reducing occupational accidents and diseases.

63. **A representative of Romania** said that under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, the minimum wage was established objectively and systematically in consultation with the social partners, using a recently adopted formula and in accordance with European Union legislation. The percentage of the population in receipt of the minimum wage had fallen from 26 per cent in 2023 to 22 per cent in 2024.

64. **Mr. Hennebel** (Country Task Force) said that he would like to hear the delegation's comments on the lack of participation in the interactive dialogue by civil society. He also wished to know whether the State party planned to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Covenant; if so, he would like to know the timeline, and if not, he would like to know what obstacles were hindering such a step, and whether a debate on that decision had taken place. It would be useful to know what specific measures had been adopted to provide effective protection to children against all forms of exploitation. He would welcome details of the sanctions imposed in cases of exploitation of children and adolescents, as well as information on cases of domestic violence that had been investigated and the protection mechanisms available to victims. He wished to know how often protective placements were reviewed and how abuse was monitored and addressed. It would also be good to hear how the public was made aware of the harm caused by corporal punishment and encouraged to refrain from employing such methods.

65. The Committee would like to know whether the State party planned to undertake public awareness-raising activities to combat gender stereotypes, particularly regarding the equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women; it would also be useful to have statistics on that subject. He would like to know when Law No. 21/1991 would be reviewed in order to grant Romanian nationality to children born in the State party who would otherwise be stateless. Information would be welcome on the specific steps taken to implement the National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights, particularly to improve the living conditions of the most disadvantaged families and vulnerable children. He would also like to know what measures had been adopted in the previous three years to improve living conditions for the poorest groups, particularly with regard to access to food and decent housing, and what steps had been taken to combat socioeconomic inequality.

66. It would be interesting to have more specific information on the steps taken to grant families access to social housing and address the lack of such housing. More information was required in relation to forced evictions, including on relevant legal provisions and the measures adopted to prevent such evictions, with particular reference to the Roma community. He would welcome statistics on the forced evictions undertaken over the previous seven years, disaggregated by region. The Committee would be interested to hear how disadvantaged groups' access to drinking water, sanitation, electricity and public transport was guaranteed. It would also appreciate information on informal settlements, including the types of families that lived there.

67. He would like to hear the delegation's comments on disadvantaged groups' enjoyment of their right to health, particularly with regard to the health care and family planning services provided to pregnant, older, migrant and Roma women and women with disabilities. He wished to know what budget had been allocated to mental health care and how access to it had been improved. He would also like to know how the State party planned to afford all women adequate, unhindered access to legal abortion and post-abortion care, as well as sexual health care. It would be good to have information on the practice of conscientious objection to abortion by health-care providers. Lastly, the delegation should comment on corruption, particularly in the public health-care sector, and how it hindered disadvantaged groups' access to the public health-care system.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.