



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 3062nd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 17 April 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Balcerzak

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Combined thirteenth and fourteenth periodic reports of Albania (continued)
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1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Albania joined the meeting.*
2. **Ms. Esseneme** (Country Rapporteur) said that, according to the periodic report, the Law on Protection against Discrimination, which had been amended in 2020, envisaged hate speech as a new form of discrimination. She wished to know which specific provisions of that law punished hate speech, what were the constituent elements of the offence and what penalties it carried.
3. Noting that the media were required to publish the final decisions of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination in hate speech cases, she said that she wished to know what the legal status was of decisions handed down by the Commissioner, at what stage they were considered final and legally binding and whether they could be challenged before the administrative or judicial courts. It would be useful to know what kind of cooperation existed between the Commissioner and the courts and how many decisions on hate speech had been adopted and published since the amendment of the Law on Protection against Discrimination.
4. The Committee would be interested to know how many complaints had been filed, investigations conducted, prosecutions brought and decisions handed down under the articles of the Criminal Code that prohibited incitement of hatred and calls for national hatred, respectively. It would also be interesting to learn what administrative or other measures had been taken to prohibit organizations that promoted and incited racial discrimination and participation in such organizations, in accordance with article 4 of the Convention. The Committee would welcome further information on the composition and structure of the No Hate Alliance that had been established in 2020 to combat hate speech and on the results of its activities, especially in relation to public hate speech by opinion leaders and politicians and in respect of hate speech on social media.
5. The Committee noted that new grounds of discrimination, including that of “outer appearance”, had been added to the Law on Protection against Discrimination. In that regard, she would like to know which provisions of Albanian law prohibited and punished racial profiling and how many cases of racial profiling had been recorded. She would be grateful for an update on the status of the criminal proceedings that had been instituted in the 32 incitement cases that the head of delegation had mentioned in her opening statement.
6. The Committee would appreciate an explanation of the functioning of the High Prosecutorial Council, the High Judicial Council and the General Assembly of Judges, the nature of the cooperation between them and their respective roles in the administration of justice. It would be interested to know what measures had been taken to improve access to justice, including in respect of the provision of legal aid to persons from national minorities, especially persons from the Roma and Egyptian communities. The delegation might describe the conditions and requirements that applied to those who wished to benefit from legal aid. While the Law on Legal Aid Guaranteed by the State enshrined the protection of the rights of vulnerable persons, it was unclear what criteria were used to determine vulnerability.
7. The State party had several mechanisms, policies and programmes designed to combat trafficking in persons. She wished to know how many victims or potential victims of trafficking had been identified, what steps had been taken to address their situation and how many investigations had been conducted and prosecutions brought against traffickers.
8. In 2020, the national human rights institution, the People’s Advocate of Albania, had been reaccredited with A status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. She would be interested to know whether the People’s Advocate had implemented the recommendation of the Subcommittee on Accreditation to seek a broader mandate that included the ability to address all human rights violations resulting from the acts or omissions of private entities. The delegation might explain why the Committee had been unable to find

any relevant public information on the work of the People's Advocate in the area of combating racial discrimination.

9. Furthermore, she would be interested to know whether there was a regulatory or supervisory body that ensured the observance of the memorandum of cooperation signed by the People's Advocate and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination in order to avoid the duplication of efforts. She wondered what the relationship of those institutions was with the justice system.

10. **A representative of Albania** said that Albania had amended its legislation to address online hate speech, in accordance with the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime and its Additional Protocol concerning the Criminalisation of Acts of a Racist and Xenophobic Nature Committed through Computer Systems, by adding relevant articles to the Criminal Code. The importance of combating hate speech was recognized in various policies and strategies, including the Government's strategy to counter extremism, the National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma Persons and Egyptians (2021–2025), the Strategic Plan of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and the National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021–2030). The Law on Audiovisual Media, the Code of Conduct for Political Parties in Albania and the Electoral Code also addressed the issue.

11. The Constitution, the Law on Protection from Discrimination, the Criminal Code and other laws formed a legal framework that underpinned institutional efforts to prevent, combat and protect against hate speech. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the Ministry of Education all participated in those efforts. The High Judicial Council, the High Prosecutorial Council and the School of Magistrates had included the subject of hate speech in their training curricula. The Ministry of Internal Affairs had a special cybercrime department which identified and responded to offences, including hate speech and discrimination.

12. **A representative of Albania** said that the Criminal Code provided for the offence of discrimination and for aggravating circumstances in the event of offences that were motivated by, inter alia, gender, race, sexual orientation or religious conviction. The Criminal Code, which had been amended in 2013, foresaw a penalty of up to 10 years' imprisonment for incitement of hatred, which previously had been punishable by a fine. Calls for national hatred were punishable by 2 to 8 years' imprisonment.

13. According to statistics from the General Prosecution Office, between 2020 and 2022, there had been 13 prosecutions for incitement of hatred under article 265 of the Criminal Code, but very few convictions. During the same period, there had been one case of calls for national hatred, but no conviction under that charge. It was therefore clear that there was room for improvement in enforcing the provisions of the Criminal Code. The General Prosecution Office, the High Prosecutorial Council and the High Judicial Council had taken measures to encourage the filing of complaints. Complainants were regarded as potential victims of discrimination and thus were eligible for legal aid.

14. The Law on Audiovisual Media had been amended in 2023 to bring it into conformity with European Union directive No. 2018/1808 amending the Audiovisual Media Services Directive and to lay down specific rules for operators, journalists and media service providers. Social media was not subject to regulation. Albania adhered to the European Convention on Human Rights and therefore recognized the right to freedom of expression under article 10 of that Convention.

15. In July 2023, the Audiovisual Media Authority had adopted a new version of the Audiovisual Media Broadcasting Code, which included revised definitions and fundamental principles, including the principle that broadcasts should promote tolerance and must not encourage racial discrimination or incite conflicts between nationalities and ethnicities. Accordingly, the media were under an obligation to distance themselves from racial discrimination and hate speech.

16. The parliament had approved a code of ethics that regulated the communications of parliamentarians. It covered both parliamentary and non-parliamentary activities and included a specific article on discriminatory and sexist language. Measures could be taken against members who used such language.

17. The High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council had various responsibilities related to the governance of the justice system. Both were required to propose training for magistrates. The two institutions cooperated and held a joint meeting once a year. They also considered recommendations issued by Council of Europe and United Nations mechanisms.

18. There was systematic parliamentary oversight of the implementation of the memorandum of cooperation between the People's Advocate and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination. Both institutions submitted annual reports to the parliament, which they presented before certain parliamentary committees and representatives of civil society. The memorandum functioned properly and ensured that the institutions' responsibilities did not overlap. In recent years, the budget of the People's Advocate had increased, and both institutions had been assigned additional staff.

19. **Ms. Esseneme** said that the relationship between the People's Advocate, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and the justice system was unclear. She wondered whether the Commissioner cooperated with prosecutors, for example. It would also be useful to know how the Commissioner's decisions were enforced, whether they might be contested before the courts, at what stage they were considered final and whether the media were obliged to publish decisions related to discrimination or hate speech. Lastly, she would appreciate clarification of whether the offence of discrimination set forth in the Criminal Code included the prohibited grounds listed in the Convention, namely, race, colour, descent and national or ethnic origin.

20. **Ms. Tlakula** said that it had been reported that a lack of digital skills and access to technology prevented members of the Roma and Egyptian communities from fully enjoying their rights and hindered their access to public services, which were increasingly digitalized. She therefore wished to know what measures were taken to reduce the digital divide, particularly for those minorities. She wondered what steps had been taken to address misinformation and disinformation that perpetuated racial hatred on social media platforms.

21. **A representative of Albania** said that independent studies had found Albanian legislation to be fully in line with international standards on discrimination. There was, however, a need to increase public awareness of the possibility of lodging complaints, both online and through representatives. To that end, an intersectional strategy on hate crime and a strategy targeting children vulnerable to racial discrimination had been adopted. Between the Criminal Code and the Law on Protection from Discrimination, a broad range of grounds of discrimination had been established, including all those set out in the Convention. Similarly, the Criminal Code defined more than 50 offences as hate crimes, and the Prosecutor General had issued guidance on the matter. Prosecutors were required to report all such crimes. The number of recommendations issued by the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination that had been implemented had increased in 2023, while others were in the process of implementation or under consideration by the courts. Work on discrimination was coordinated by the parliament.

22. **A representative of Albania** said that more than 80 per cent of the decisions of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination were referred to the courts, and for their part, the courts were required to notify the Commissioner if they received complaints of discrimination directly from victims. The Commissioner's decisions – which the Commissioner rendered as an *amicus curiae* – were binding, although they could be appealed, and they had the same force as court decisions. Public television broadcasters were required to communicate final decisions relating to hate speech. The Commissioner's decisions were used by the courts to determine the damages to be awarded to victims of discrimination.

23. **A representative of Albania** said that a broad range of groups were entitled to legal aid, including victims of discrimination and trafficking in persons.

24. **The Chair** said that the State party should strengthen the parliament's involvement in implementing the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and consider accepting the individual communications procedure under article 14 of the Convention.

25. **Mr. Diaby** (Country Task Force) said that he would like to know how the State party was improving access to the health-care system, including community health care, for ethnic

minorities, particularly the Roma and Egyptian communities, and in rural and remote areas. He would welcome an update on the progress made and challenges faced since the introduction in 2018 of legislation on the acquisition of nationality and the prevention of statelessness. The Committee would particularly wish to know whether the State party had drawn up a national plan to eradicate statelessness and had established a mechanism to identify and assist stateless persons.

26. It would be interesting to hear whether special measures had been adopted to combat the multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination suffered by minority women and whether the State party had collected statistics on persons of African descent, including through the 2023 census. He wished to know whether an investigation had been launched into the rape and death of Ms. Joy Aoko, and whether the perpetrators had been sentenced. It would be of interest to the Committee to learn how the use of stereotyping language in public spaces was addressed and whether the State party planned to actively support the second International Decade for People of African Descent. The Committee would like to find out how the State party prevented racism in sport, both in Albania and abroad, and whether the 2018 round table on protection for human rights defenders had led to the drafting or adoption of specific legislation to provide them with protection.

27. **Ms. Tebie** said that she wished to know what proportion of the Roma community had access to health insurance, what steps had been taken towards ensuring universal health-care insurance coverage, and whether the draft decision on the Fund for National Minorities had been adopted and, if so, what the Fund's effect had been.

28. **Ms. Shepherd** said that it would be helpful to know how the State party assessed the impact of its efforts to combat discrimination, what challenges it had faced in its assessments and whether it had drawn on the Committee's general recommendations. She also wished to know what the State party did to improve the public's understanding of the dangers of hegemonic masculinity.

29. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she would like to know what progress had been made in implementing the Law on the Protection of National Minorities and whether the State party had acted on the Committee's previous recommendation to develop a strategy to encourage birth registration among migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. Statistics on stateless persons living in the State party would be welcome, along with information on measures adopted in relation to stateless children born in Albania, including how they could obtain nationality. Did the State party plan to ratify the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness?

30. **A representative of Albania** said that stateless children born or found in Albania were granted Albanian citizenship. The national civil registry issued birth certificates to children born to foreign nationals. Guidance had been issued on the processing of requests for stateless status, and a strategy would soon be adopted that would offer a clear path to citizenship for stateless persons by affording them information on long-term residency. There were also plans to introduce specific residence permits for stateless persons and to deploy civil registry staff to maternity units. Albania had acceded to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in 2003, and stateless persons had been included in the 2023 census. Improvements to the legal framework and capacity-building for civil registry staff had led to the granting of citizenship to more than 2,800 stateless children, half of whom belonged to Roma communities, between 2018 and 2023, as well as a reduction in the time taken to resolve such cases and an increase in birth registration.

31. **A representative of Albania** said that the prevention of hate speech was addressed through inclusive and non-discriminatory school curricula, particularly in history and citizenship classes, which also addressed statelessness, non-discrimination and issues affecting minorities. Bilateral committees had been established with neighbouring countries to ensure that teaching on historical events did not lead to hate speech. School textbooks were vetted by the Ministry of Education to ensure that they were inclusive and non-discriminatory. Efforts were made to ensure that educational projects run by civil society organizations and other bodies did not lead to discrimination.

32. At education institutions, hate speech was dealt with as a form of verbal violence. More than 70 per cent of the around 1,500 cases of violence recorded in schools in 2023 had related to verbal violence. Schools were fully equipped to deal with such incidents, for instance through psychosocial services and ethics and discipline committees. Persons convicted of criminal offences were barred from working in schools. All children, including Roma children, were encouraged to pursue vocational education in order to broaden their opportunities and facilitate their entry into the labour market, and children who chose to do so were not prevented from entering higher education. The law prohibited discrimination of any kind in sport and provided for fines for perpetrators, while the statutes of sporting associations were required to contain anti-discrimination provisions.

33. **A representative of Albania** said that data from the 2023 census, which would be published in June 2024, would not include disaggregated statistics on persons of African descent, for reasons of data security.

34. **A representative of Albania** said that vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, were defined and their needs addressed, inter alia in article 59 of the Constitution, which set out the State's social objectives in spheres such as employment, health and education; in the Law on Social Assistance, which listed the social benefits for which vulnerable persons were eligible; in the Law on the Rights and Protection of Children, which made specific reference to children belonging to minority groups; and in the Law on Social Housing, which laid down the conditions under which families and individuals who were impoverished or whose current housing was substandard could apply for social housing. An estimated 80,000 members of the Roma and Egyptian communities were currently receiving health-care services.

35. Albania was a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and to the European Social Charter. To date, five policy dialogue seminars on the inclusion of the Roma and Egyptian communities in Albania had been held with representatives of the European Union. The recommendations that had emerged from those seminars focused on several priority areas, including anti-Gypsyism, which was defined in the European Union Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation 2020–2030.

36. **A representative of Albania** said that, in 2022, two confirmed victims and 110 possible victims of human trafficking had been identified, including 74 children. Foreign nationals had accounted for only three of the victims. Of the 27 victims who had suffered sexual abuse, there had been 5 women and 21 girls. In 2023, 1 confirmed victim and 164 possible victims of human trafficking had been identified, including 109 children. Again, most of the victims had been Albanian nationals; there had been just 3 foreigners among them. The majority of the 23 victims who had suffered sexual abuse had been girls.

37. Albania was a party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Suspected cases of human trafficking could be reported via the 24-hour hotlines operated by the police and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. A new national action plan to combat human trafficking covering the period until 2025 had been drafted. Priority would be given to preventing and countering human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, including through false promises of marriage and employment and online grooming.

38. In Albania, the legal age of marriage was 18 years. Early marriage was prohibited by law and was addressed in the National Agenda on the Rights of the Child 2021–2026 and the National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021–2030). Early marriage was no longer widespread; of the 18,082 marriages registered in 2022, none had involved a person under 18 years of age. Events to raise awareness of the phenomenon had been held at schools and information sessions had been organized by the national anti-trafficking committee. The Law on the Rights and Protection of Children specifically addressed the protection of children online, as did the National Cybersecurity Strategy 2020–2025.

39. Previous iterations of the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking had included targeted measures to protect women in the Roma and Egyptian communities. Those measures had been complemented by others that had been set out in the National Action Plan

for the Integration of Roma Persons and Egyptians, which were designed to ensure that those population groups had access to education, the justice system, housing and social protection on an equal footing with the rest of the population. Most members of the Roma and Egyptian communities who fell victim to human trafficking were trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation or begging. Information sessions were held throughout the year to raise awareness of the dangers of human trafficking. Members of minority groups who were victims of trafficking had access to State- and civil society-run services designed to help them rejoin society. The services included vocational training and employment programmes.

40. **A representative of Albania** said that the case of the young Kenyan girl who had been attacked in Albania in 2022 and who had subsequently died in Kenya in 2023 was still under investigation. It was unclear whether the case should be classified as a homicide and whether the victim had been raped. Those responsible for the attack had not yet been identified. The State Police had requested and were awaiting the autopsy report from the Kenyan authorities.

41. **A representative of Albania** said that providing the Roma and Egyptian populations with equal access to technology continued to pose a challenge. Members of those population groups could gain access to technology through community centres run by municipal authorities. The Civil Registry Office continued to provide persons who did not have access to the e-Albania portal with hard copies of essential documents.

42. Article 21 of the Law on the Protection of National Minorities provided for the establishment of the Fund for National Minorities to support initiatives and projects aimed at protecting their rights and at preserving and promoting their distinct cultural, ethnic, linguistic, traditional and religious identities. The Fund was financed by the State and administered by the National Minorities Committee, which had issued a call for applications for funding for such initiatives and projects in 2022, 2023 and 2024. Applications were still being accepted for 2024. Once the application process had concluded, the National Minorities Committee would decide which activities would be awarded funding.

43. **A representative of Albania** said that Albanian health policy was focused on achieving universal access to health-care services and on narrowing the health gap between minority groups and the rest of the population. Specific measures had been taken to ensure the availability of health-care services in rural areas, such as the deployment of mobile health units. The health services now employed social workers responsible for dealing with vulnerable groups.

44. The National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021–2030) was intersectoral in nature and addressed the intersectional discrimination often experienced by women who belonged to minority groups.

45. **A representative of Albania** said that some parents, including the parents of Roma and Egyptian, stateless or undocumented foreign children, were unable to apply for admission to primary or secondary education on behalf of their children via the e-Albania portal. Steps had thus been taken to allow them to do so via an alternative electronic means. Parents who were not in possession of the necessary technology could request their preferred educational establishment to assist them with the registration process. No students were excluded from primary or secondary education by reason of their civil status.

46. **A representative of Albania** said that, between 2019 and 2022, only a few criminal cases involving human trafficking had been heard, resulting in just two or three convictions per year. The final statistical data collected for 2023 were being reviewed and would be published in the second half of 2024.

47. **A representative of Albania** said that the publication of disinformation in social media was not specifically addressed in Albanian legislation and was the subject of some debate in Albanian society. As Albania had been the target of disinformation campaigns carried out by hostile countries, a special commission had been established to review and, if necessary, update existing legislation, while ensuring compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights. The People's Advocate, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and the Albanian Media Institute monitored and reported disinformation that was published online.

48. The impact of measures to prevent and combat racial discrimination was subject to regular monitoring and was measured against a set of predefined indicators and targets. Challenges remained, however, and those measures did not always yield the expected results. All institutions concerned with preventing and combating racial discrimination were required to report on the progress that they had made towards fulfilling their obligations and to identify areas where there was room for improvement.

49. As a member State of the Council of Europe and a candidate for membership of the European Union, Albania had a strong record of international reporting on human rights issues and inter-institutional cooperation. The implementation of the National Plan for European Union Integration was subject to oversight by the parliament. The National Council for European Integration had been set up within the parliament to advise on and promote cooperation among different actors in European integration matters. Several times a year, the Government reported to the European Commission on efforts to prevent discrimination and to promote equality, religious tolerance and harmonious relations among minority groups, and it was taking steps to implement General Policy Recommendation No. 12 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, on combating racism and racial discrimination in the field of sport. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Albania actively encouraged States to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. In autumn 2024, the country planned to organize an international conference on the fight against racism and discrimination, with a special focus on promoting religious tolerance.

50. The case of the young Kenyan girl who had been attacked in Albania in 2022 and the subsequent delays in investigating the incident had triggered a strong reaction among civil society and women's organizations. It was hoped that the information requested from the Kenyan authorities would shed further light on the case and allow the investigation to move forward.

51. **Mr. Diaby** said that it would be useful if the delegation could clarify whether a national strategy to prevent and combat statelessness was in place, and provide more information on how the community of African descent was portrayed in school textbooks and on the language used to refer to persons of African descent in the education system. He wondered whether the multi-stakeholder round table on the resolution in support of the activities of human rights defenders that had been adopted by the parliament in 2019 had paved the way for the adoption of a specific law to protect human rights defenders. Lastly, he would like to know whether linguistic barriers prevented Roma and Egyptian women, particularly those living in the suburbs or in rural areas, from gaining access to health-care services and, if so, what the State party was doing to remedy that situation. Additional information on how health services were delivered to those women would also be appreciated.

52. **Mr. Amir** said that it was not sufficient to adopt legal provisions prohibiting racial discrimination; such provisions must be accompanied by enforcement measures, particularly in view of the threat posed by the rise of the far right across Europe. While some progress had been achieved, more needed to be done to increase the visibility and representation of minority groups, especially the Roma community, in national forums where their voices could be heard and their concerns taken on board. Only then could they become equal partners in Albanian society.

53. **Mr. Gwalawala Sibande** said that he wished to know how many refugees there were in Albania and where they were from. He would welcome a comment on the State party's reported unwillingness to process refugees and asylum-seekers within the framework of an agreement with Italy. Lastly, he would welcome data on the health services to which refugees in the State party had access.

54. **Ms. Tebie** said that she wondered whether steps had been taken in follow-up to the decision to create a fund that members of minority communities could draw on for support for cultural projects and, if so, what the outcome of those steps had been.

55. **Ms. Boker-Wilson** said that, in view of troubling reports received by the Committee, she would welcome a comment from the delegation on the measures taken by the State party to ensure that all Roma and Egyptian families had access to safe water and sanitation.

56. **Mr. Guissé** said that it would be interesting to know how experiences of anti-Albanian sentiment had informed the authorities' efforts to combat racial and ethnic prejudice and discrimination.

57. **A representative of Albania** said that foreign nationals, including persons of African descent, were well received in the country and that its inhabitants were traditionally hospitable people. There were relatively few persons of African descent in Albania, and most of them were passing through on their way to States members of the European Union. Racial discrimination in sports had never been a problem.

58. **A representative of Albania** said that history classes taken by students at schools where the language of instruction was a minority language covered the history of the country's minorities. For students at ordinary schools, such classes were optional.

59. All children, including child refugees and asylum-seekers, had access to education. There were slightly more than 1,000 child refugees and asylum-seekers enrolled at the country's primary and secondary schools. They received educational, psychological and social support and, if they wished, help learning Albanian.

60. **A representative of Albania** said that, in 2022, the administrators of the fund for national minorities had called for applications for grants for projects intended to promote and preserve the cultural heritage of the country's minority communities. In 2023, there had been another call for applications, that time on a slightly different theme. The names of the organizations that had won grants could be submitted in writing. The 2024 call for applications was still under way.

61. **A representative of Albania** said that human rights defenders, who could submit complaints or opinions to the courts, including the Constitutional Court, were active in Albania. The country's media, too, played an active role in the defence of human rights. Some 20 years earlier, the defenders of the human rights of the country's minority communities had typically not themselves been members of those communities. However, since then there had been changes, and those who spoke up for the rights of Roma and Egyptian communities were generally from those groups. In many cases, they had returned to Albania after having studied abroad.

62. **A representative of Albania** said that the National Migration Strategy and Action Plan included measures to reduce statelessness. Although Albania was a transit country, the authorities had received 125 applications for international protection in 2022; 42 decisions had been made on those applications. The figures for 2023 had been 261 and 36, respectively. In 2023, persons from Afghanistan had been the largest group of applicants for such protection. Nationals of Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ukraine, Somalia, Nepal and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had also sought protection in Albania.

63. Asylum-seekers were provided with considerable support. They were given access to accommodation, education and health care and included in social activities. A reception centre in Babrru had beds for up to 250 refugees and employed a staff of 15, including psychologists, social workers and lawyers. Persons who could not be treated by on-site health-care personnel were referred to appropriate clinics or hospitals. The institutions that administered the Babrru reception centre had not received any complaints about the services that were provided by the centre.

64. Persons fleeing Afghanistan and Ukraine in particular had been given special permission to remain in the country for extended periods. The management of migration flows on the country's borders had improved. Efforts were made, for example, to identify victims of trafficking in persons and unaccompanied minors. Steps had been taken to draw up a contingency plan for migration management. The plan was expected to be ready in 2025. A number of other steps, including legislative steps, had been taken, some with the support of the International Organization for Migration, to make migration management more robust. Reception centres for migrants entering Albania had been created at a number of locations. Migrants enjoyed freedom of movement and freedom from discrimination under the Constitution, and refoulement was prohibited. The rights of migrants, including

asylum-seekers, were set forth, in accordance with the Constitution and the relevant international instruments ratified by Albania, in the country's laws.

65. **A representative of Albania** said that, according to publicly available data, 84 per cent of Roma households had access to electricity and drinking water. The Government was making efforts to expand the role of the social service workers who were active with the Roma and Egyptian communities. In their newly expanded role, they would help members of the Roma community in their dealings not only with the country's educational institutions, but also with providers of social and health services.

66. It was too soon to know what impact the public services project approved by the World Bank would have. The results of the project could be described in a future report to the Committee.

67. Foreigners were treated well in Albania. Albanian citizens were mindful of the plight of foreigners, as they themselves had often been treated poorly during their prior stays in other countries. Albania had not objected to housing refugees and asylum-seekers during the processing of their applications for asylum in Italy; on the contrary, such persons would be accommodated in Albania while their applications for international protection were considered.

68. **A representative of Albania** said that, in recent years, nearly 700 members of Roma communities had been given help using the electronic system that the Government had developed for the provision of electronic and other public services. Awareness-raising activities organized in part by the Albanian School of Public Administration had touched on topics such as racism, bullying on the basis of ethnicity, mental health and child violence. Roma and Egyptian women who were victims of domestic violence or trafficking in persons were provided with social and psychological support.

69. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she was grateful to all those who had made a fruitful dialogue with the delegation possible. Future dialogues could be more fruitful still if the State party updated its common core document.

70. **A representative of Albania** said that her country would continue to take measures to make its legislative, institutional and policy frameworks for the elimination of racial discrimination more robust. Those measures would be informed by the Committee's concluding observations, which her delegation was looking forward to receiving.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.