



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Summary record of the 703rd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 13 March 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Fitoussi (Vice-Chair)

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

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

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

Combined second and third periodic reports of Azerbaijan (continued)
([CRPD/C/AZE/2-3](#); [CRPD/C/AZE/QPR/2-3](#))

Articles 1–10 and 11–20

1. **A representative of Azerbaijan**, responding to questions put at the previous meeting, said that ensuring access to the physical environment and transport was among the priorities of her Government, particularly given that Azerbaijan was to host the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change later in the year and other international events. As part of efforts to provide such access, in 2023 approximately 2,400 ramps had been built for 315 streets and intersections. Under the “Ideal Pavements” projects, 70 roads had been improved and new pavements with tactile tiles for persons with visual impairments had been constructed in Baku. Some 525 buses equipped with ramps had been delivered to Baku between 2020 and 2023, and 500 buses had bus stop announcement systems. Other measures included the installation of traffic light buttons and audio signals at pedestrian crossings. A large number of taxis had been equipped with signs in Braille. Special places had been reserved on trains and in rail stations for wheelchair users. Tactile tiles had been installed at stations and platforms for persons with visual impairments, and accommodation had been made for their accompanying animals. High-speed trains rolled out in 2024 would take account of the necessary accessibility requirements. Steps were also being taken to implement universal design principles in the provision of goods and services. For example, several banks had brought accessible automated teller machines into operation.

2. Accessibility was ensured for persons with disabilities in newly built hospitals. Medical institutions that did not meet modern standards were monitored, with work to correct deficiencies ongoing. Two health resorts had recently been constructed for children with disabilities in two regions in the country. Numerous projects for the reconstruction of institutions for the treatment of persons with disabilities had undergone expert assessments to ensure that they were in keeping with the relevant urban planning and construction requirements. Ramps and elevators had been provided in 23 residential housing projects for persons with disabilities. The need for fire alarm systems tailored to different disabilities was taken into account.

3. The necessary requirements relating to the living and working conditions of persons with disabilities were reflected in numerous legal provisions, including articles 57.2.7, 62.1 and 70.2.3 of the Urban Planning and Construction Code. The Code had been amended in accordance with the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The responsibilities of the relevant authorities had been clearly defined, and rules on State monitoring of compliance with regulations on the rights of persons with disabilities had been introduced. Reasonable accommodation was provided on the basis of applications by persons with disabilities, their legal representatives or non-governmental organizations.

4. The design and construction of buildings and structures were regulated by relevant technical requirements and standards, which were regularly updated. There were plans to work on new construction standards, including industry-specific standards, beginning in 2024; that exercise would involve organizations of persons with disabilities. Training sessions on accessibility and universal design principles were also planned and would include those organizations. Organizations of persons with disabilities had participated in the National Urban Forums organized in collaboration with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). Her Government would continue to monitor the implementation of measures to promote the rights of persons with disabilities to ensure that issues of accessibility and reasonable accommodation were taken into account and existing barriers were removed.

5. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the Ministry for Emergency Situations gave high priority to persons with disabilities during all phases of disaster response, including

search and rescue and evacuation operations. It provided regular training and conducted exercises for first responders. There was a specific training programme covering the application of appropriate methods and approaches to meet the needs of persons with disabilities during operations. Furthermore, the Ministry was in the process of increasing the capabilities of the rescue service in that regard by providing the latest advanced tools and special-purpose equipment.

6. The Ministry had learned from international best practices and policy documents in the field of civil protection of persons with disabilities. It had drafted several proposals to be included in the legislation on civil protection, which was currently being updated. The proposals were intended to promote the rights of vulnerable groups during all phases of emergency management. The Ministry was also updating its civil contingencies plan, which was expected to address issues relating to the protection of persons with disabilities and include those persons in the disaster risk reduction process.

7. All necessary measures were taken to ensure fire safety for persons with disabilities. According to a Cabinet of Ministers decision in 2019, workplaces with persons with disabilities must be equipped with appropriate protective devices, depending on the nature of the disabilities in question. His Government intended to improve the existing law on fire safety by introducing amendments to address the needs of persons with disabilities. Currently, the services responsible for fire safety under the Ministry were working to increase their technical capacities with advanced innovative methods and early warning systems.

8. The Ministry was taking preventive measures for the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk. For example, a short message service (SMS) system was being tested for the purposes of mass warning of the population, including persons with disabilities. Efforts were currently focused on developing a database on persons with disabilities for the SMS system. Different communication channels were being used, such as the VKontakte social networking service and the 112 call centre. Persons with hearing or communication impairments registered with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection received an SMS upon calling the 112 call centre.

9. The Ministry attached the utmost importance to ensuring the resilience of children with disabilities in the face of disaster. It not only addressed the needs of children with disabilities during emergencies but also took appropriate action to reduce risks and ensure that they participated in training and awareness-raising activities as part of the civil protection preparedness process. For example, an annual national children's art competition, entitled "Emergency situations through the eyes of children", was held with the involvement of children with disabilities, to raise awareness about disasters. The Ministry had also held awareness-raising workshops about disaster prevention in partnership with international organizations. The overall objective was to bring together international partners, government agencies, associations, local non-governmental organizations and experts from countries with concrete experience and best practices to take stock of progress and challenges in the field of inclusive disaster risk reduction.

10. **A representative of Azerbaijan** added that the Ministry would be launching in 2024 a new mobile application to facilitate communication with the 112 call centre for persons with disabilities.

11. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the Baku metro was one of the most widely used means of public transport. Up until 2019, the metro had not been accessible for all passengers with disabilities, as most of the system's stations and main lines had been constructed during the Soviet period. A project called "Accessible Metro" had been running since 2019. The best practices of different metro systems and international standards concerning wheelchairs and ramps had been studied and adopted during the first phase of the project. During the preparatory stage, the Baku metro authority had held meetings with persons with disabilities in order to listen to their concerns and consider their requests. It had prepared instructions on the provision of assistance and use of machines to facilitate the movement of wheelchair users, held training sessions, developed a mobile application to enable persons with disabilities to order assistance services ahead of time and procured equipment to facilitate the transport of passengers with disabilities on escalators and stairs. While new trains met the requisite accessibility standards, old ones did not. The authority

had therefore begun to redesign coaches according to the standards and make places available for wheelchairs. The authority took every opportunity to inform the public about disability issues through video clips and social messages.

12. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that assistance to victims of landmines had been an issue in Azerbaijan since 2020, following the liberation of national territories that had been occupied for 30 years. Approximately 1 million mines had been laid in those territories during the occupation. His Government was currently working closely with the United Nations and other partners to address the problem. Azerbaijan had put forward an initiative to add mine action to the Sustainable Development Goals, which would make it the eighteenth such Goal.

13. Responding to a question raised concerning the main ministry responsible for disability issues, namely the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, he said that, as was clear from the composition of the delegation, there were many other agencies involved in addressing those issues, not least the Ministry of Health. Broadly speaking, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection was responsible for rehabilitation, social integration and social inclusion, while medical issues were covered by the Ministry of Health.

14. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the State Medical and Social Assessment and Rehabilitation Agency under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection provided comprehensive services for persons with disabilities caused by mine explosions. Those persons underwent rehabilitation programmes at specialized centres operated by the Agency. In 2023, 137 persons with disabilities caused by mine explosions had received rehabilitation services as inpatients and 21 as outpatients. Furthermore, the prosthetic and orthopaedic rehabilitation centre had supplied 1,295 assistive devices to 76 mine survivors. The Government remained committed to facilitating the reintegration of mine survivors and their families into society.

15. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the Ministry of Health had created 11 counselling centres in several cities throughout the country offering mine survivors treatment, psychotherapy, crisis intervention and assistance with post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental conditions. Such assistance was provided by psychiatrists and psychologists in outpatient settings. In 2020, the Ministry had set up a special rehabilitation centre for war veterans, which was also open to members of their families and to persons affected by mines. The purpose of the centre was to improve the quality of care by offering appropriate treatment conditions. For example, adapted sports equipment and swimming pools had been provided to assist patients with reduced mobility, and medical staff had been specially trained to work with persons with disabilities. To date, 2,425 persons had received qualified medical services, including specialized psychological support, at the centre.

16. In 2023, the Ministry of Health had set up a call centre to facilitate the provision of psychological care and medical rehabilitation services to war veterans. The call centre operated 24 hours a day and had 34 staff members, including two persons with disabilities, and handled between 30 and 35 calls per day. In 2023, it had received about 10,000 phone calls.

17. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs was a relatively small entity made up of 70 to 80 persons. By comparison, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection had between 8,000 and 9,000 staff members. A recruitment process was under way to replace the woman with a disability who had left the Committee to take a post in the parliament of Azerbaijan.

18. The Government continued its efforts to facilitate access to social benefits, including through innovative digital solutions such as the new tool that allowed persons with disabilities to receive certain benefits automatically, without having even to apply for them, once their degree of disability was assessed and determined.

19. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that preventing domestic violence was a priority of the State. Azerbaijan regularly submitted reports under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which it had acceded in 1995. A national action plan on the prevention of domestic violence had been approved for the period from 2020 to 2023. Under the action plan, the authorities had reviewed national legislation in the

light of international standards and assessed the requirements for implementing a special programme of support for victims with disabilities. The Government planned to adopt a new national action plan on the prevention of domestic violence for the period from 2025 to 2029, which had already been drafted and approved by the relevant institutions. The new action plan contained a set of comprehensive support measures for victims, including persons with disabilities. The parliament was currently considering amendments to the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and in fact had recently adopted an amendment to provide free legal assistance to victims. The executive branch had established monitoring mechanisms for the prevention of domestic violence. Eleven Child and Family Support Centres and 17 Women's Resource Centres had been established, including 3 in areas affected by armed conflict. In 2023, 70 persons with disabilities had applied to Women's Resource Centres for psychological and legal support. Between 2019 and 2023, 849 persons with disabilities had turned to Child and Family Support Centres. All municipalities had gender commissions that provided assistance to victims of violence, and hotlines had been set up to ensure timely action by the authorities.

20. One of the Government's objectives was to raise public awareness of the problem of domestic violence. For that purpose, it had organized seminars, including with the participation of persons with disabilities; published a special booklet on the rights of women with disabilities; organized training for journalists, social workers, medical staff, law enforcement officers, lawyers, judges and students; and produced educational television programmes. In December 2023, Azerbaijan had hosted an international conference on the protection of vulnerable groups from domestic violence.

21. In April and May 2023, the State Statistical Committee and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had conducted a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey on the social situation of women and children. The aim of the survey was to collect data, including data on violence against women with disabilities, in order to inform policies. The data was being processed and the findings would be published in late 2024.

22. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the Shelter and Social Rehabilitation Institution of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection provided social services to vulnerable groups and sought to ensure their social integration. In August 2021, the Ministry had established a new department for the social rehabilitation of victims of domestic violence, whose aims included the prevention and elimination of domestic violence and the provision of assistance to victims. Since its establishment, the Institution had provided various social services, including legal, psychological and medical services, to 174 domestic violence victims. In addition, three non-governmental organizations were accredited to operate assistance centres. In 2021, the Social Services Agency had carried out a project to raise public awareness of the negative consequences of domestic violence, including through educational measures and the distribution of videos on social media.

23. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the Government and the World Bank had implemented the Azerbaijan Judicial Services and Smart Infrastructure Project in order to improve access to justice for persons with disabilities by facilitating their movement in court buildings. To that end, special flooring for visually impaired persons, signage and lifts had been installed.

24. A person with a disability sat on the citizens' council that had been established under the Ministry of Justice, pursuant to the Law on Public Participation, to ensure public oversight and transparency in the justice system. The council member in question assisted the Ministry in cases pertaining to disability issues in the judicial and penitentiary spheres. Council members were acquainted with measures taken in relation to conditions of detention, food, medical care and the correctional process and reintegration into society of various categories of prisoner, including persons with disabilities.

25. The Ministry of Justice carried out correctional and educational work with prisoners, measures to improve their psychological well-being and measures for their social reintegration. Prisoners with disabilities were provided with special beds and other medical and technical equipment, and those who were registered as having a mental health condition were monitored and received regular treatment. Examinations were carried out to identify prisoners in need of prostheses or other orthopaedic or medical equipment. In 2023, about

20 prisoners with disabilities had been provided with orthopaedic shoes or socks, wheelchairs or replacement prostheses. In accordance with article 78.2 of the Criminal Code, three seriously ill convicts had been deemed unable to serve the remainder of their sentences and had been granted early release.

26. Psychologists worked with prisoners with psychosocial development problems by educating them about the protection of their mental health and helping them to adapt to prison life and to manage or restore their interpersonal relations. Psychological services provided in prisons included education, consultation, diagnosis, correction and prevention. Prisoners were informed of their right to apply for psychological services and were given appropriate recommendations. Psychologists regularly observed and conversed with prisoners, including during the admission process, and used appropriate test methods to diagnose mental health problems. They also enlisted the support of prison employees and family members and recommended appropriate work, education and leisure opportunities for prisoners. The Government cooperated closely with non-governmental organizations in the areas of general education and specialized vocational training, considering that the acquisition of a profession was an important part of prisoner rehabilitation.

27. Article 28.8 of the Civil Code provided that guardianship might be established over natural persons who suffered from mental retardation or mental disease and were declared by a court to lack legal capacity. Transactions on behalf of a legally incapacitated natural person were only considered valid if performed with the consent of the guardian. In 2023, the authorities had received 1,558 applications to have an individual declared legally incapable; the courts had considered 1,086 applications and had handed down 845 final decisions.

28. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the Government was in favour of supported decision-making and, therefore, judicial proceedings incorporated a mechanism to ensure that all decisions taken on legal incapacity were correct and legitimate. Statistics showed that almost half of applications for declaration of legal incapacity had been rejected.

29. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that combating child marriage was another of the State's priorities. The minimum legal age for marriage was 18 years, although in special cases it was possible to marry at 17 years with parental consent. In 2022, the authorities had prevented 269 early marriages. In 2020, 2,000 children had been born to parents in registered early marriages – a figure that had fallen slightly in 2021. The Government recognized the need to improve the legislative framework to eliminate the exceptions that allowed for early marriage and to establish the criminal responsibility of individuals who conducted marriage ceremonies involving a person under 18 years of age. In that regard, it was preparing amendments to the Criminal Code.

30. State bodies and civil society organizations conducted awareness-raising on the subject of early marriage. The Cabinet of Ministers had adopted a resolution on raising awareness among young people about the importance of family and marriage and the negative consequences of early marriage and consanguineous marriage. Outreach efforts on the subject included workshops, meetings and seminars organized by Child and Family Support Centres, Women's Resource Centres and municipal gender commissions, with the participation of persons with disabilities. Posters condemning early marriage had been displayed in bus and train stations; leaflets and booklets had been published; and research had been conducted. The Ministry of Science and Education and UNICEF organized round tables on the themes of early marriage, domestic violence and healthy living. The Government was preparing legislation to prohibit violence and corporal punishment against children with disabilities.

31. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the Public Health and Reforms Centre of the Ministry of Health promoted healthy living and healthy nutrition for children. The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Science and Education and civil society organizations had carried out a project to teach girls in secondary schools and their parents about sexual and reproductive health.

32. The law provided for two different types of non-consensual psychiatric treatment. On the one hand, forced hospitalization could be imposed by a court upon persons who had committed a crime and were found to be of unsound mind. On the other hand, involuntary

hospitalization might be necessary in cases where the patient was suicidal or aggressive and could inflict harm on others; where the patient, due to illness, could not carry out basic functions such as finding their way home; or where the patient was at risk of harm to their health. The latter process was initiated by a physician, who would refer the case to a court, which then had 48 hours in which to decide whether to commit the patient to a psychiatric institution for 30 days. During those 48 hours, a doctors' commission would be appointed and would prescribe a course of treatment.

33. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that, while the delegation was able to address issues arising under article 15 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it was not in a position to reply to the question put at the previous meeting concerning article 3, on the prohibition of torture, of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) and related judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. Concerning article 15, any persons who acquired disabilities as a result of torture would automatically be provided with financial support and would receive free regular treatment under a rehabilitation programme.

34. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection had worked with the World Health Organization (WHO) to expand the list of assistive devices available to persons with disabilities and group the devices according to the classification used by WHO. A total of 57 different devices were currently available; negotiations were under way to increase that number to 81. The Government funded the acquisition of such devices. A "Rehabilitation Bus" project had been launched in 2022 to enhance the accessibility of outpatient rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. The services were provided by staff from rehabilitation centres and medical technicians who specialized in prosthetics and orthopaedics. The project enabled persons with disabilities to have assistive devices delivered to their place of residence. Specialists from rehabilitation centres provided them with training in handling such devices. In 2021, the Government had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Romatem network of rehabilitation centres in Türkiye. Some of the network's physiotherapists ran online weekly training sessions for staff in Azerbaijani rehabilitation centres, and others were working at a centre in Baku in order to share their expertise in enhancing the mobility and well-being of persons with disabilities. The Government continued to hold consultations with the main manufacturers of assistive devices in order to ensure that mobility solutions were technologically advanced, cost-effective, culturally sensitive and tailored to the diverse needs of persons with disabilities.

Articles 21–33

35. **Ms. Gamio Ríos** said that the Committee had received reports that women with disabilities who wished to have children or had become mothers had been subjected to discriminatory remarks by medical personnel. Accordingly, she would like to know what steps were being taken to formalize in law the professional conduct and ethical standards to be met by such personnel. The delegation might wish to comment on the progress made in implementing the recommendation, issued in 2018 by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), that the State party should eliminate the restrictions on the voting rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities.

36. **Ms. Fefoame** said that she wished to know what measures had been taken to ensure that all children with disabilities had access to an inclusive education in mainstream schools and that those schools recruited appropriately trained teachers, offered accessible facilities and used teaching materials that were adapted to the needs of such children. She would be particularly interested to hear about measures taken to ensure that children with disabilities had equal access to early childhood development opportunities, in line with the recommendations made to the State party in 2023 by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. (CRC/C/AZE/CO/5-6, para. 34 (e)) It would be helpful to learn what had been done to guarantee that all persons with disabilities, particularly women, were able to exercise their rights to vote, run for public office and participate in the conduct of public affairs.

37. **Ms. Boresli**, noting that almost all children with disabilities in the State party appeared to be homeschooled or taught in residential schools, said that she would be grateful for information on the steps taken to realize the right of those children to an inclusive

education and reasonable accommodation and to guarantee them access to remedies should that not be the case. The delegation should explain what action was planned to increase the enrolment of children with disabilities in mainstream schools at all levels. She also wished to know what measures had been taken to ensure that the Ministry of Education fulfilled its responsibility to implement policies for the education of children with disabilities.

38. **Ms. Kayess** said that she wished to know how the State party upheld the right to freedom of expression and opinion of persons with disabilities who expressed dissenting views on matters such as living conditions and discrimination, religion and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. She would be particularly interested in learning about the protection afforded to persons with disabilities belonging to ethnic minorities or the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer community.

39. It would be helpful to know whether the 2019 census had used the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning and whether the information contained in the State party's register of persons with disabilities was used to inform a broad range of policy areas, rather than just disability policy. She would like to know whether the State party compiled data disaggregated by disability and, if so, whether such data were collected across all policy areas and whether organizations of persons with disabilities were actively involved in the data-collection process.

40. **Sir Robert Martin** said that he was concerned about the delegation's use of outdated and discriminatory terms such as "mental retardation". He wished to hear how the State party would promote the acceptance of persons with intellectual disabilities and prevent them from being segregated from their communities.

41. **Ms. Thongkuay**, speaking in follow-up to previous questions on article 16, said that she wished to know whether the Strategy for Children for 2020–2030 and the 2020–2025 action plan for its implementation contained cross-cutting provisions dealing specifically with children with disabilities and institutional measures to strengthen the protection of their rights. It would be useful to hear about any steps taken to support the physical, cognitive and psychological recovery and rehabilitation of children with disabilities who had been subjected to exploitation, violence or abuse.

42. Turning to article 27, the Committee would be interested to learn about the measures adopted under the socioeconomic development strategy for 2022–2026 to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market and any mechanisms in place to enhance the employability of such persons. She wondered whether the State party had established data-collection mechanisms aimed at monitoring companies' compliance with the quota system for the recruitment of persons with disabilities.

43. **Mr. Kabue** said that he, too, wished to know what the State party was doing to enforce the quota system. He would appreciate information on the affirmative action taken to ensure that persons with disabilities were included in public life and able to occupy decision-making positions.

44. **Mr. Schefer** said that the presidential election of 7 February 2024 had been monitored by OSCE, which had reported that the elections had been marked by the stifling of critical voices, the absence of political alternatives, a disregard for electoral safeguards and substantial procedural errors. Given that the enjoyment by persons with disabilities of the right to participate in elections presupposed the fairness of those elections, he wished to know whether the State party planned to improve the fairness of its elections in order to ensure fulfilment of its obligations under article 29 of the Convention.

45. **Ms. Fernández de Torrijos** said that the Committee had been informed that the national library, most theatres and cinemas outside the capital were not accessible for persons with disabilities. She would therefore like to know what steps the State party was taking to ensure that such persons were able to participate fully in cultural life, recreation and sport.

46. **Ms. Dondovdorj** said that the delegation might wish to clarify what was meant by "inclusive education at home" in paragraph 217 of the report under consideration (CRPD/C/AZE/2-3). She would be interested to learn how many children with disabilities were outside the education system and why they were in that situation. It would be useful to

know what the State party was doing to ensure that children with disabilities in rural areas had the same access to rehabilitation services as their peers living in the capital.

47. **Mr. Makni** said that he would welcome the delegation's comments on concerns that social protection benefits were allocated to households, rather than individuals, which meant that households consisting of several persons with disabilities could be at a disadvantage. He wished to know what steps had been taken to guarantee the independence of the State party's national human rights institution and ensure that its membership was diverse and included persons with disabilities.

48. **Ms. Jacobs** (Country Rapporteur), speaking in follow-up to questions put at the previous meeting (CRPD/C/SR.702), said that she would appreciate additional information on the processes in place for the consultation of persons with disabilities. It would also be helpful to learn about the steps being taken to develop accessibility regulations, whether persons with disabilities were actively involved in that process and when it would be completed. Regarding article 24, she wondered what measures were in place to ensure that students with disabilities had access to post-secondary education, to remove barriers faced by persons with disabilities studying at that level and to provide them with access to complaint mechanisms.

49. **Ms. Boresli** said that she would welcome clarification as to whether the special monitoring commission described by the delegation at the previous meeting had begun to operate and was competent to make recommendations on disability issues to all sectors and levels of government. What steps had been taken to ensure that that mechanism was compliant with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles)?

50. **Ms. Kim Mi Yeon** (Country Rapporteur) said that the delegation might wish to describe the measures taken to train and employ specialist staff, particularly sign language interpreters, in order to improve inclusive education and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. She would welcome information on any steps taken to tackle unemployment among persons with disabilities, make workplaces more accessible to them and ensure that employers made active efforts to hire them. She wished to know what the State party was doing to ensure that persons with disabilities had equal access to health care, provide such persons with tailored health services and tackle discrimination against them in health-care settings. It would be useful to learn whether organizations of persons with disabilities were involved in efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

The meeting was suspended at 11.55 a.m. and resumed at 12.10 p.m.

51. **The Chair** said that she wished to remind the delegation of the importance of using appropriate terminology when discussing disability issues.

52. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that health protection laws provided that women, including women with disabilities, had the right to choose whether to become mothers and to use the family planning method of their choice. Most reproductive health services were covered under the mandatory health insurance scheme. The Ministry of Health had approved a code of ethics for medical personnel, which provided them with guidance on effective and appropriate communication with all patients, including those with disabilities. The Government was aware, however, that issues persisted and hampered the delivery of high-quality health care for persons with disabilities. There was a need to provide health-care workers with more training in delivering health care for such persons. The Administration of the Regional Medical Divisions was planning to run training in communication skills, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders and non-governmental organizations.

53. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that a number of initiatives had been implemented under the State Programme for the Development of Inclusive Education for 2018–2024. Articles on inclusive education had been incorporated into laws governing preschool, general and vocational education. The Government had approved regulations on the implementation of inclusive education in general education schools; the next step would be to introduce measures for the delivery of inclusive education in preschools and vocational schools. Construction work was under way to enhance the accessibility of the four general education schools offering inclusive education. The Government had received support from

UNICEF in developing a teacher training course on inclusive education, and teachers at newly established inclusive schools would receive additional training from the Institute of Education. Inclusive education training courses for teachers in preschools and vocational schools would begin in 2025.

54. The Government had established an electronic database containing information on children with disabilities in education. That information, which remained confidential, was used for the preparation of individual education plans. There were approximately 12,000 children who required special education. Around 500 children with disabilities had been enrolled in preschools for the 2023/24 academic year. A total of 220 children with disabilities received general education in inclusive education programmes and 578 in special classes, while 7,210 were homeschooled. Some 1,000 children with disabilities attended non-residential special schools. Special or general education boarding schools were attended by more than 2,000 such children. The Government intended to reduce that number and ensure that children with disabilities were able to learn in the community.

55. Education was provided to children at home on the basis of a list of conditions approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. The main difference between receiving inclusive education in school or at home was that children who were homeschooled might be more isolated. However, children whose condition improved could re-enrol at school.

56. One of the main reasons for the institutionalization of children with disabilities was their enrolment in one of the country's eight special boarding schools. However, an increasing number of inclusive and integrated schools, as well as rehabilitation centres, were now available to children with disabilities, and the number of such children enrolled in special boarding schools was thus falling steadily.

57. Steps were being taken to lift the remaining legal barriers so that children with disabilities could have access to education in their own communities. As the lack of special education teachers was a key factor in that regard, the Ministry of Science and Education was developing a special education qualification.

58. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that a response to the questions relating to article 21 on freedom of expression and opinion and access to information, would be submitted in writing.

59. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the electronic register of persons with disabilities contained disaggregated data. In addition to information on the extent, duration and cause of a disability, whether a disability was initial or recurrent and the dates of forthcoming disability assessments, it included details of employment guarantees, driving licences, education, employment and medical services provided by public health-care institutions. The database was in its final stages of development and would be introduced to the public in 2024.

60. In addition to the medical component, seven main categories of activity were considered in disability assessments: self-care, mobility, orientation, communication, behaviour control, learning and employment. In collaboration with the World Bank, a project was under way to reduce the dependence of the disability assessment on medical data and increase the social component. The WHO Disability Assessment Schedule, which included similar components to the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning, had been chosen for the project.

61. The project to modernize the rehabilitation system for persons with disabilities had been launched in partnership with the European Union. The project's objectives included moving towards a social model of rehabilitation, creating a list of services and a framework for rehabilitation in institutions and developing alternative methods of service delivery based on best practices established in Europe.

62. In his view, it was not necessary to amend the wording of article 25 of the Constitution, since the Azerbaijani term, "people with limited health capacities", could be directly translated as "persons with disabilities". It should be noted that the categories of people covered included older persons.

63. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that a response to the question on the Strategy for Children would be submitted in writing. Concerning participation in decision-making, approximately 42,000 persons with disabilities – 8 per cent of the total number of persons with disabilities in Azerbaijan – were currently employed in the public sector, many of them actively involved in decision-making processes.

64. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the total number of persons with disabilities who were of working age was 370,000, 27 per cent of whom were employed. In addition, 42,000 persons with disabilities were working as entrepreneurs. The State had taken specific measures to promote the employment of persons with disabilities, such as the provision of adapted vocational training programmes and the setting of employment quotas for people in need of social protection.

65. The employment quota for persons with disabilities was 3 per cent for companies with 25 to 50 employees, 4 per cent for companies with 50 to 100 employees and 5 per cent for companies with more than 100 employees. The Public Employment Agency had facilitated the employment of more than five times as many persons with disabilities in 2023 as in 2022 – 2,300 individuals compared to 400.

66. A self-employment programme had been implemented to support unemployed individuals with setting up small businesses, with the aim of fostering economic independence. Within the framework of the programme, in 2023, 1,800 persons with disabilities had received International Labour Organization “Start and Improve Your Business” training. Temporary employment opportunities were available through paid public work that could be performed without prior training. In 2023, 600 persons with disabilities had been engaged in paid public work, thereby improving their skills and social integration.

67. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said, regarding Mr. Schefer’s question on the fairness of the presidential election, that the delegation was not able to address matters that did not fall within the scope of the Convention. He would be grateful if the Chair could urge Committee members not to use the current dialogue for political discussion.

68. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that article 17.6.19 of the Election Code required all possible opportunities for participation in elections to be created for voters with disabilities or other physical disorders and voters living in remote locations who required special voting conditions. No reports had been received from the 19,000 local observers and nearly 800 international observers present during the 2024 presidential election of persons with disabilities being prevented from taking part. The electoral law of Azerbaijan ensured the independent and unimpeded participation of disabled voters.

69. Since 2003, the Central Election Commission had been implementing large-scale projects to ensure that disabled voters faced no barriers to voting and did not require assistance. For example, Braille stencils were available for visually impaired persons and mobile ramps could be installed for voters with limited mobility. All videos for the 2020 parliamentary elections and the 2024 presidential election had included subtitles. A portable ballot box was provided for voters who were unable to attend a polling station, because of health issues for example.

70. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that measures were being taken to increase the number of children’s rehabilitation centres from four to six. An outpatient rehabilitation centre project had been launched to improve children’s access to rehabilitation services, ensure that progress made in rehabilitation was sustained and strengthen the provision of rehabilitation services throughout the country, including in regions without rehabilitation centres. More than 24,000 children had been provided with rehabilitation services in 2023.

71. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that several rehabilitation centres for children with disabilities were under construction or were soon to open, which would significantly expand coverage across the country.

72. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that 162 coordinators had been employed by the State Agency on Mandatory Health Insurance to ensure that persons with disabilities received the necessary medical services. The coordinators’ responsibilities included registering such persons, ensuring that medical examinations and treatments were scheduled in a timely manner and supervising the provision of medical services contracted to private

health-care institutions. While psychological support was not covered by mandatory health insurance, it was available to vulnerable population groups, including people with disabilities, children and victims of domestic violence, free of charge. A total of 441,000 medical services had been provided to more than 12,000 persons with disabilities in health-care institutions in 2023.

73. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that the question asked by Sir Robert Martin would be answered in writing.

74. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that steps had been taken to improve the accessibility of cultural institutions for persons with disabilities. For example, in the Republic Children's Library in Baku, a special section had been created for visually impaired and hearing and speech impaired children. Special software for the visually impaired had also been installed on all library computers. Cinemas and theatres had introduced accessibility measures such as the provision of sign language interpretation and ramps. Measures had been taken to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in the competitive examinations for the recruitment of teachers to children's music and arts schools. There were currently 20 visually impaired teachers working in the music school for visually impaired children in Baku. An Azerbaijani culture concept was being developed to promote the inclusion of all members of society in cultural and creative events, activities and pursuits, for example by improving accessibility and taking the rights of persons with disabilities into account.

75. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that there were two nationwide free-to-air television channels, which broadcast the main news programmes with sign language interpretation. Most television channels airing popular sporting events had real-time captions. As many foreign films and series aired by public television channels already had subtitles, the aim was for all such films and series to be subtitled by the end of 2024.

76. The issues experienced by persons with disabilities were often discussed on television and radio programmes with the participation of persons with disabilities themselves and specialists from government bodies, institutions and non-governmental organizations. In 2023, more than 100 programmes broadcast by public television channels and close to 70 programmes broadcast by private channels had addressed the problems experienced by persons with disabilities and promoted their participation in all areas of society.

77. **A representative of Azerbaijan** said that he was grateful to the Committee for the productive discussions and for its valuable recommendations. He would like to suggest that Azerbaijan should host a side event at a future session of the Committee or an event in Azerbaijan in order to increase further public awareness of the Convention's provisions.

78. **Ms. Kim Mi Yeon** said that she wished to thank the delegation of Azerbaijan for its cooperation and comprehensive responses during the constructive dialogue. The Committee remained concerned, however, by the continued use of derogatory language to describe persons with disabilities in laws and policies, and the lack of meaningful participation of organizations representing persons with disabilities in the development of legislation and regulatory instruments. Other concerns related to, inter alia, discrimination against women and children with disabilities, the low employment rate among persons with disabilities and involuntary or forced hospitalization. The Committee recognized the efforts made by the State party to implement the Convention and encouraged it to act on the Committee's recommendations.

79. **The Chair** said that the Convention did not exist in isolation. Indeed, it had been adopted to provide a foundation for ensuring that international laws and international cooperation took account of persons with disabilities. Committee members exercised their mandate in that spirit.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.