



# International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Distr.: General  
15 July 2024

Original: English

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## Human Rights Committee 141st session

### Summary record of the 4116th meeting\*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 2 July 2024, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Abdo Rocholl

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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant

*Fourth periodic report of Croatia*

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\* No summary records were issued for the 4114th and 4115th meetings.

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant**

*Fourth periodic report of Croatia (CCPR/C/HRV/4; CCPR/C/HRV/QPR/4)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Croatia joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Croatia**, introducing his country's fourth periodic report (CCPR/C/HRV/4), said that all relevant State agencies had participated in the drafting of the report. As a State Member of the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe, Croatia was committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, including civil and political rights.
3. Croatia had chaired the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for the first time in 2018 and, in that capacity, had worked to further the Council's efforts to fight corruption and protect national minorities. He was pleased to note that an experienced Croatian diplomat – Ms. Marija Pejčinović Burić – was now at the helm of the Council of Europe. In the first half of 2020, Croatia had held the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first time and had successfully guided the work of the Council and its member States through the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.
4. Croatia had recently held the presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and, as a full member of the Human Rights Council from 2017 to 2019, had acted as a reliable partner in the fight against discrimination, the promotion of gender equality and the protection of vulnerable groups, including migrants and refugees. In 2018, Croatia had chaired the Council's Working Group on Situations, which handled complaints relating to gross violations of human rights.
5. His country fully supported the universal periodic review process and actively participated in it. He was particularly pleased to note that Mr. Ivan Šimonović, the current Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations in New York, would shortly be contributing to the work of the Committee as one of its members.
6. His Government had taken steps to strengthen the legislative framework for the furtherance and protection of human rights and, as part of that effort, had ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in 2021. At the national level, over the previous five years, the Government had adopted the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and the Suppression of Discrimination, the National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment, the National Plan for Gender Equality, the National Plan for the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, the National Plan for Roma Inclusion and a new protocol for dealing with hate crimes.
7. Femicide had been defined as a criminal offence, and the Act on Protection from Domestic Violence had been amended to establish that sexual harassment was now classified as a serious criminal offence rather than a misdemeanour. New offences relating to hate crimes had also been established. The probation service had been strengthened, the electronic monitoring system had been enhanced and prison conditions had been improved. The Government had also taken steps to modernize prison infrastructure and procedures in order to bring the prison system into compliance with international standards.
8. Over the previous five years, a number of measures had been adopted to increase the efficiency and transparency of the legal system. Legislative amendments had been introduced to refine the criteria used for the appointment of judicial officials, to enhance access to justice, to assist judges to develop specializations in specific types of cases and to ensure the anonymization of published court decisions in order to enhance the transparency of the legal system and strengthen public trust in the judiciary. The funds allocated for the provision of free legal aid had also been significantly increased.
9. Efforts had been made to encourage the equal distribution of household chores and parental responsibilities between women and men. The number of highly educated women and the proportion of decision-making positions occupied by women were on the rise. The Criminal Code had been amended to include a legal definition of gender-based violence

against women and to ensure that the use of such violence was considered to be an aggravating circumstance in all cases. The penalties for the criminal offence of rape had been increased, and the Criminal Procedure Act had been amended to improve the legal framework for protection against domestic violence.

10. The Government provided support to counselling centres for victims of domestic and sexual violence. Several domestic violence hotlines had been set up, and 25 shelters for victims of domestic violence were in operation. Public campaigns had been launched to raise awareness of the problem of violence against women. The Government promoted gender mainstreaming in policymaking and had developed measures for the prevention and early identification of situations of domestic violence. Victims of domestic violence were encouraged to report incidents to the police and were given access to shelters and psychosocial support. Perpetrators were also provided with psychosocial support.

11. The Operational Programmes for National Minorities had been developed in cooperation with representatives of minority communities and had been running since 2017. They provided protection for the rights of minority groups in Croatia in accordance with the Constitution, the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities and other laws and promoted cultural tolerance and consistent adherence to the rule of law. The Government was implementing the National Roma Inclusion Strategy 2013–2030 to promote and protect the rights of the Roma people. The Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy had been operating successfully since 2003. Its members were appointed from among State officials and members of the Roma community.

12. The laws governing asylum were fully in line with the relevant laws of the European Union. Under the International and Temporary Protection Act, applicants for international protection enjoyed the right to free legal aid, information and legal advice during international protection proceedings. The Government had developed standard operating procedures for supporting unaccompanied minors and reuniting them with their families.

13. The New Neighbours Project promoted the inclusion in society of persons granted international protection. The Government had set up an independent mechanism to monitor the conduct of police officers responsible for dealing with border protection, irregular migration and asylum cases. The mechanism had been launched in conjunction with the European Commission and was in operation in police stations, at border checkpoints and in reception centres for migrants and asylum-seekers along the borders with Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro.

14. The Government had adopted protocols on the identification, assistance and protection of victims of trafficking in persons and on their voluntary and safe return in 2017 and had then adopted a protocol on the integration and reintegration of trafficking victims in 2019. It was in the process of adopting a new national plan against trafficking in persons that would define a strategic framework for the further development of the anti-trafficking system. In that connection, efforts would be made to empower the officials involved in running the system, to ensure that traffickers were prosecuted and to provide assistance and protection to their victims.

15. The Government had been working to combat hate crimes since 2011, when the first protocol relating to the problem had been adopted. Since 2015, statistics on hate crimes were published and submitted to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. A working group on hate crimes had been established and, in 2021, a new protocol for dealing with hate crimes had been adopted.

16. A great deal of importance was accorded to the issue of human rights education. Training programmes on various aspects of human rights, including discrimination, domestic violence, trafficking in persons, hate crimes and hate speech, were conducted for judicial officials, police officers and civil servants.

17. The Regional Housing Programme was a multi-year joint initiative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia that addressed the housing needs of the most vulnerable social groups, including refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons. Between the programme's launch in 2011 and its completion in 2023, €20.6 million had been spent and 382 families had been provided with housing. Three projects were being

implemented to construct or renovate State-owned buildings and housing damaged in the earthquakes that had hit Croatia in 2020.

18. Thirty years after the Homeland War, the Government was still striving to ensure that perpetrators of offences committed during that conflict did not go unpunished and to support their victims. Victims of sexual violence were entitled to compensation under the Act on the Rights of Victims of Sexual Violence in the Homeland War. Although the fate of most of the war victims had been determined, the burial locations of 391 casualties were still unknown and around 1,700 missing person cases were still unresolved. The Government had taken steps to improve every aspect of the search process and to uphold the right of families to know the fate of their loved ones. The legislative framework governing searches had been improved, as had cooperation between government departments and with associations of families of missing persons and other countries.

19. **Ms. Donders** said that she wished to know whether the State party intended to establish a comprehensive system for the preparation of reports for treaty bodies and the implementation of their recommendations. The Committee would welcome information on the functions, effectiveness and mandate of the Human Rights Commission. Was it involved in coordinating the follow-up of treaty body recommendations and Views? It was not clear whether the concluding observations issued by the treaty bodies were routinely translated into Croatian and brought to the attention of stakeholders and the media.

20. She would be interested to hear about any steps to expedite the adoption of the action plans on human rights for 2024 and 2025 and thereby ensure civil society participation in the full implementation of the National Plan for Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination 2021–2027. The Committee would be grateful to learn why no new plan or strategy relating to the participation of civil society in lawmaking and policymaking had been adopted. The delegation might describe any measures being taken to guarantee the full independence of the Children’s Ombudsperson, the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality and the Ombudsperson for Persons with Disabilities.

21. She would be interested to know whether any plans were in place to translate the Covenant into Croatian and whether the human rights training given to judges and legal professionals addressed the treaty body system of the United Nations and the human rights treaties, including the Covenant and the first Optional Protocol thereto. The Committee would be grateful for information on the number and types of cases in which the Covenant had been invoked before the national courts.

22. **Mr. Santos Pais** said that he wished to know what measures would be taken to prevent corruption in State-owned companies and enterprises run by local and regional governments. He would be interested to learn whether the legal framework governing conflicts of interest and the declaration of assets had been assessed and, if so, what the outcome of that assessment had been. The Committee was curious to know whether persons staffing internal reporting channels were given training and whether whistle-blowers were informed of their rights.

23. As white-collar political corruption was a prominent concern, he wondered what steps were envisaged for preventing conflicts of interest. The delegation might describe any measures being taken to expedite the processing of corruption-related cases by the courts and to ensure the confiscation of illegally obtained assets. The Committee would be interested to learn why so few of the persons reported on suspicion of corruption had subsequently been tried. How many government officials had been convicted of corruption-related offences and what punishments had they received? What percentage of the material gains unlawfully obtained through acts of corruption had subsequently been recovered?

24. He wished to know whether the State party planned to set up a centralized case management system for all State agencies involved in tackling the problem of violence against women. The delegation might comment on the claim that the laws currently in force did not clearly differentiate between acts of domestic violence that should be classified as minor offences and those that should be classified as serious offences, leaving such decisions to the discretion of the police and the prosecution service.

25. The Committee would welcome the delegation’s comments on reports that acts of gender-based violence were frequently treated as isolated incidents, with the authorities

neglecting to consider patterns of coercive control and prolonged exposure to violence. The delegation might describe any further training envisaged to address the lack of gender sensitivity among law enforcement officers, judges, prosecutors and social workers and any plans to incorporate the gender perspective into investigations and legal proceedings. What steps were being taken to ensure early and effective intervention in domestic violence cases?

26. He wondered what steps were being taken to increase the number of court-ordered precautionary measures, protection orders and eviction orders in cases of domestic violence and to put a stop to so-called dual arrests, whereby, in addition to the perpetrator, the woman victim of domestic violence would be charged for attempting to defend herself. What steps would be taken to facilitate the participation of victims of domestic violence in judicial proceedings and to ensure that the best interests of any children involved were taken into account? The delegation might indicate whether there were plans to expand the capacity of shelters for women, to increase their funding and provide greater access to legal and psychological support services.

27. **Mr. Ndiaye** said that members of the Serbian national minority reportedly represented a disproportionate number of the persons prosecuted for war crimes, that victims faced numerous hurdles in securing reparations and that complainants faced the prospect of having to pay heavy damages if their cases were dismissed. There were also indications of a lack of cooperation between Serbia and Croatia in the prosecution of war crimes and the identification of remains. He would like to know what steps had been taken to speed up and ensure the impartiality of the prosecution of war crimes, how many cases had been prosecuted and persons convicted and what measures the Government had taken to improve cooperation with the authorities in Serbia. The Committee would be interested to learn what had been done to facilitate access by victims of war crimes, including rape victims, to reparations and to remove disproportionate procedural requirements that were not in keeping with international standards; how many victims had received reparations since the Committee had issued its most recent concluding observations; and how many persons had been required to pay damages or procedural fees when the cases they had brought had been dismissed.

28. He would like to hear about the steps taken by the Government to bring national legislation into line with the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance since the State party's accession to that instrument. The Committee would like to find out how many cases of enforced disappearance had been solved since its consideration of the third periodic report, how the authorities dealt with new cases that emerged as a result of the use of forensic DNA analysis to identify human remains, how many forensic teams were trained and equipped to search for the remains of missing persons in mass graves and how many mass graves remained to be searched. He would appreciate it if the delegation could describe how the State party worked with international partners that assisted it in such searches and outline its efforts to inform and assist the family members of disappeared persons.

29. The Committee was concerned by reports of a tendency towards historical revisionism, including among the authorities, involving the glorification of the fascist regime that had come to power during the Second World War and by reports that the vast majority of hate crimes went unreported, that prosecutions were rare and that, when perpetrators were convicted, they were often given light penalties. Hate crimes targeting Jews, members of the Serbian minority, migrants, refugees, Roma and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons were reportedly on the rise. He would like to know whether the Government intended to strengthen the penalties for hate crimes and to take further steps to encourage people to report such acts and provide protection for victims and witnesses. Did it intend to establish a coherent national system of transitional justice to establish the truth, ensure that criminal prosecutions were objective and balanced and provide reparation for victims and guarantees of non-repetition?

30. **Mr. Teraya** said that he would like to know what measures the Government had taken to combat residential segregation and to improve the access of the Roma minority to quality housing and essential services. The Committee would be interested in any statistics comparing the situation of the Roma population with that of the general population and showing whether disparities were increasing or diminishing. It would also like to find out what measures the Government was taking to increase employment opportunities for the

Roma community, to improve the school enrolment and completion rates of Roma students and to ensure their integration in an inclusive education system for all.

31. The right to equal and official use of minority languages in Croatia was apparently subject to the requirement that at least 30 per cent of a local population must report the use of the minority language in question. In Vukovar, the use of Cyrillic script had reportedly been prohibited when the size of the Serbian minority had descended to 29.73 per cent of the total population. He would like to know whether the Government considered that the application of the 30 per cent threshold was compatible with international standards and an appropriate way to ensure respect for minority language rights. It would also be of interest to hear about the educational opportunities made available to Roma children in their mother tongue.

32. The Committee would welcome information on specific measures taken to address discrimination and hate crimes directed against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community and to ensure their dignity in the workplace. It would like to know how much time was devoted in the education system to covering topics such as tolerance, non-discrimination and diversity and whether the acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons was specifically addressed in schools. Did the Government have plans to establish a legal basis for the provision of health-care services to meet the specific needs of transgender persons?

33. **Mr. Soh** said that he would like to receive information on initiatives to address gender inequality and gender stereotypes and to ensure adherence to the Ordinance on the Textbook Standard and Members of Expert Committees for the Evaluation of Textbooks and Other Educational Materials. The delegation was invited to comment on reports of complaints about gender stereotyping in textbooks. It would be of interest to the Committee to learn more about the enforcement of the provision of the Gender Equality Act that set out fines for political parties that did not respect the principle of gender equality in elections and to hear whether there were plans to correct imbalances in candidate lists. It would be useful to know whether the provision of the Code of Corporate Governance in the Republic of Croatia that called for greater representation of women on boards of directors was enforced and what steps had been taken to reduce the gender pay gap.

34. He invited the delegation to outline the measures in place to ensure that refusals of service by medical professionals on grounds of conscience did not impede access to legal abortion services and the mechanisms used to collect data on the extent of such refusals. The delegation was also requested to inform the Committee whether there were plans to impose penalties in the event of an institutional refusal to provide such services. Did the Government have a timeline for the adoption of legislation on abortion and for its alignment with the Covenant? The Committee would be interested to hear about measures taken to ensure that all pregnant women, including undocumented migrant women, had timely access to quality and affordable maternal health care and about any monitoring mechanisms in place to help ensure that women were not subjected to mistreatment when they sought maternal and reproductive health care.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.10 p.m. and resumed at 4.30 p.m.*

35. **A representative of Croatia** said that the Government intended to establish an institutional framework for the preparation of its periodic reports and the monitoring of implementation of the Committee's recommendations by 2025. The Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Anti-Discrimination Plan had been drawn up with broad participation by civil society organizations, including organizations representing groups that were often victims of discrimination. Disparities in the resources and degrees of independence of the various Ombudspersons' offices would be addressed by legislation adopted in May 2024 that was to be implemented over the following two years.

36. **A representative of Croatia** said that the Government had made efforts to raise awareness of the Covenant and to inform citizens of their rights and of the possibility of directly addressing the Committee. All government bodies had posted the Covenant and its Optional Protocols on their websites. The Judicial Academy had held 59 training sessions in the past five years for nearly 1,200 participants on topics related to the rights covered by the Covenant, including hate crimes, hate speech, human trafficking, domestic violence,

discrimination, protection of crime victims, the right to diversity and freedom of speech. In its 2025 programme, the Academy had included a workshop devoted to the Covenant for judges and prosecutors, and the Academy and the Bar Association regularly held training sessions on human rights. References to the Covenant often appeared in court decisions. If the Committee considered it useful, the delegation could subsequently provide a list of such decisions in writing.

37. **A representative of Croatia** said that public perceptions of anti-corruption efforts, while inevitably subjective, indicated that there was indeed a need to improve policy and raise public awareness about the detrimental effects of corruption and about the mechanisms in place to address the problem. The Government had adopted the Act on the Protection of Reporters of Irregularities (Whistle-blower Protection Act) in 2022 and had conducted an assessment of the law's implementation, in particular in respect of State enterprises. It was currently carrying out a media campaign that highlighted whistle-blower protection and involved a number of round-table discussions and seminars at schools on anti-corruption policies. It had also drafted legislation on the activities of lobbyists and the prevention of conflicts of interest.

38. To avoid conflicts of interest, new requirements for public office holders had been introduced under the Act on the Prevention of Conflicts of Interest of 2021 along with other measures, including a mechanism for reporting conflicts of interest and an extended cooling-off period. Other measures designed to combat corruption and foster greater integrity throughout the public sector included the adoption of codes of conduct for State officials and for Members of Parliament in 2022, the passage of the new Civil Service Act, which contained provisions on conflicts of interest, and the introduction of a code of ethics for police officers in 2023.

39. **A representative of Croatia** said that the difference between the number of complaints of corruption filed with the State Attorney's Office and the number of prosecutions was attributable to the fact that every natural and legal person had the right to file such a complaint. While all complaints were investigated, an analysis of the situation had shown that the majority were filed by parties to court proceedings who were dissatisfied with the outcome, leading them to perceive the court as being corrupt. Nevertheless, between 2016 and 2023, the Office for the Suppression of Corruption and Organized Crime had prosecuted some 50 individuals – among them judges, Members of Parliament and mayors – who had been implicated in cases of high-level corruption. The authorities therefore had a good track record when it came to pursuing perpetrators of that offence. In addition, any assets or property acquired by means of a criminal act were liable to confiscation. The State Attorney General of Croatia had issued a general instruction on the confiscation of illegally acquired property, and special units had been established in local state attorneys' offices around the country for that purpose.

40. **A representative of Croatia** said that her country was one of the few States members of the European Union to have established the specific offence of the "aggravated murder of women", or femicide. That offence, which had been introduced into the Criminal Code in April 2024, carried a minimum term of imprisonment of 10 years and was not subject to a statute of limitations. The definition of gender-based violence against women incorporated into the Code had been taken directly from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention). In addition, gender-based violence was considered an aggravating circumstance in other crimes.

41. Other measures taken to combat violence against women included the definition of revenge pornography and so-called deepfake pornography as specific criminal offences. Sexual harassment, which was now classified as a serious criminal offence rather than a misdemeanour, could be prosecuted *ex officio*. Perpetrators of violence against women faced stiffer penalties; in criminal cases, for example, the imposition of community service instead of a term of imprisonment was no longer an option. A number of amendments had also been made to the Act on Protection against Domestic Violence, which covered misdemeanours, to increase fines and establish a minimum distance of 100 metres for restraining orders. In addition, breaches of protective measures by perpetrators of domestic violence were now

punishable by a minimum of 10 days' imprisonment, rather than a fine. In the courts, cases of domestic violence were handled by specialized judges.

42. **A representative of Croatia** said that the Government had made strides in its efforts to prevent femicides. A monitoring system had been set up by the police to analyse every aspect of police procedure during the investigation of a woman's murder. The police were required to complete a detailed questionnaire to assess the circumstances leading to the act, determine any risk factors and identify any weaknesses in the system. In addition, an observatory – Femicide Watch – had been established in 2017 under the Office of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, which also tracked cases. Other measures included the introduction by the Ministry of the Interior of a risk assessment form that was filled out by police officers for all domestic violence cases in order to help identify potential repeat violent offenders and determine if any special protection measures were needed for victims. In that connection, efforts to facilitate the participation of victims in criminal proceedings included cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), whose representatives were allowed to accompany victims to police stations, for example. Specialized training on human rights and on violence against women was provided regularly to police officers and students of the Police Academy; those sessions had been attended by some 1,200 participants in 2023 alone.

43. Analysis of the statistical data for the past five years had revealed that dual arrests occurred in fewer than 1.6 per cent of domestic violence cases. While such arrests took place only in isolated cases, the issue was still taken very seriously, since every instance of a dual arrest risked retraumatizing the victim. For that reason, instructions had been transmitted to all police stations on the measures to be taken by officers to avoid dual arrests. The topic was also covered in training sessions for police officers and in the Police Academy curriculum.

44. **A representative of Croatia** said that various activities had been carried out to raise public awareness of violence against women and domestic violence, including events to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and a national media campaign, with the hashtags #empathynow and #nojustificationforviolence. As part of that campaign, informational leaflets had been published, content had been posted on social networks and training on the prevention of gender-based violence had been provided to relevant experts. A newly launched three-year project entitled "No to Gender-based Violence" was set to include a new media campaign and training for experts on protection from sexual offences. The country's 25 shelters for victims of domestic violence had capacity for a total of 380 persons and an average capacity utilization rate of 60 per cent. All but one of those shelters were funded by the Government.

45. **A representative of Croatia** said that sufficient technical, human, material and financial resources were available to implement all activities relating to the search for persons who had gone missing during the Homeland War. Exhumations were conducted by an expert group, the identification of remains was carried out by several medical institutions and a joint project on DNA-led identification had been implemented in conjunction with the International Commission on Missing Persons. The main obstacle in the search for missing persons was the lack of credible information on mass graves. Nevertheless, efforts continued unabated, largely in the form of diligent information-gathering and field research work. For example, a project was currently under way to investigate a mass grave that had been found in Vukovar. Non-identified remains were systematically analysed, and support and assistance were regularly provided to family members of missing persons.

46. When it came to cooperation with the Republic of Serbia, little had changed in the last 30 years: a protocol had been developed to regulate the search for missing persons but had not been implemented, and many ongoing issues dated back to 1994. That lack of cooperation had been one of the points raised in a case submitted to the International Court of Justice.

47. **A representative of Croatia** said that his country's accession to the European Union was proof that the prosecution of war crimes was guided by impartiality considerations, since that was one of the main conditions for entry into the bloc. War crimes were admittedly complex cases to pursue, since witnesses, evidence and perpetrators were often widely dispersed. For that reason, regional cooperation was essential. The Government had made efforts to address ongoing issues in the search for missing persons in cooperation with the



Republic of Serbia, including by proposing a bilateral agreement in 2019, but no reply had been received. Various measures designed to assist the victims of the Homeland War had nevertheless been implemented, such as the introduction of specialized units to support victims and witnesses in court proceedings.

48. **A representative of Croatia** said that action taken to combat hate speech and hate crimes included awareness-raising and educational activities for police staff. The Police Academy and ongoing training programmes provided instruction to trainees and officers in how to recognize and address hate speech and hate crime offences, which included the denial of the Holocaust and the glorification of the Ustaša regime. Multimedia campaigns had been carried out to empower victims of those offences and to raise public awareness of the Croatian presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance from March 2023 to February 2024. The relevant law had been amended to significantly increase the fines for certain misdemeanours relating to the glorification of totalitarian regimes and the use of the symbols of those regimes.

49. **A representative of Croatia** said that, since public approval, denial or significant diminishment of the Holocaust, genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes were punishable offences, active measures to address historical revisionism had been incorporated into the Operational Programmes for National Minorities. Government officials accompanied representatives of organizations of national minorities to commemorate the minority victims of atrocities, provided financial support to those organizations and invested in memorial centres and related infrastructure. For example, the Government had fully funded the building of the Roma Memorial Centre in Uštica, which was dedicated to the memory of the Roma victims of the Second World War.

50. Statistical data on hate speech and hate crimes were collected and analysed, although there were some discrepancies between the official figures and those reported by NGOs. Among the measures to be taken for the protection of human rights was the creation, in cooperation with civil society, of a new system for monitoring the frequency of those offences.

51. When it came to expediting the adoption of national policies and plans, such as those focusing on the protection and promotion of human rights and on combating discrimination, it was important to note that a formal procedure was in place for such processes. The relevant office – the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities in the case at hand – was responsible for following that procedure, which included the organization of public consultations.

52. Measures and targets relating to the Roma were based on comprehensive scientific research into disparities between that community and the general population. Almost half of the Government's programmes for the Roma community had led to concrete results in terms of the improvement of the housing situation for that community.

53. **A representative of Croatia** said that the data gathered on Roma children in the education system confirmed the existence of segregation in schools, most commonly in areas where there was segregation in the local community as well. Conditions and equipment in schools had been improved, and training had been given to teachers and support to students in an effort to enhance education and boost enrolment rates. Roma children could attend preschool for free, a measure that had benefited more than 1,000 children in 2023. Improvements were being made to preschool education facilities with a view to boosting the present coverage rate of 76 per cent to 90 per cent.

54. **Ms. Donders** said that it would be interesting to hear how, and to what extent, the State party planned to combine its reporting process with its efforts to follow up on the recommendations made by human rights treaty bodies and how ombudspersons and civil society organizations were involved in that follow-up. She would welcome details on cases in which the courts had drawn on the Covenant or the Committee's jurisprudence, along with information on the training given at the Judicial Academy concerning interpretations of the Covenant by the Committee and the Constitutional Court. More generally, she wished to know whether human rights law was taught as a stand-alone subject at universities, law schools and other levels of the education system. Lastly, information would be welcome on

whether the media were covering the delegation's interactive dialogue with the Committee and whether the public was aware that the dialogue could be followed online.

55. **Mr. Santos Pais** said that he would like to have more information on the reported deterioration of the work carried out by the Commission for the Resolution of Conflicts of Interest and on efforts to accelerate sentencing in corruption cases. He wondered whether the data on violence against women that were gathered by different institutions in the State party were subsequently consolidated and whether a centralized system had been established to that end. Had legislative amendments been introduced to address the problems encountered in determining whether acts of domestic violence constituted misdemeanours or serious crimes? To what extent were video links used when victims of violence against women testified in court? He would welcome clarification as to whether those victims received free legal assistance, were fully informed of their rights and were provided with sufficient support services.

56. **Mr. Teraya** said that he would like to hear the delegation's comments on the reported failure to include goals and measures relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in recent national human rights and anti-discrimination plans, along with details of efforts to include those groups, and their organizations, in the development of such plans. Were measures to combat hate crime designed to protect that community?

57. **Mr. Soh** said that he would appreciate answers to his questions on gender equality and reproductive rights.

58. **Mr. El Haiba** said that the State party, when establishing a reporting and follow-up mechanism, could draw on Human Rights Council resolution 42/30 on the promotion of international cooperation to support national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up and the related regional consultations.

59. **Mr. Ndiaye** said that he would welcome responses to his questions concerning national policies on transitional justice, the prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity and the legal obstacles facing victims.

60. **A representative of Croatia** said that the Government Office for Gender Equality had contributed to the development of the Council of Europe Recommendation on Preventing and Combating Sexism, which had been translated into Croatian and disseminated, and had also participated in the Council's campaign against sexism and gender stereotypes. The Government's own campaigns on that subject, of which there were many, included one to combat stereotypes affecting women police officers, which had brought about a significant increase in the number of women in the Police Academy, and another on gender stereotypes in sport that had led the Croatian Olympic Committee to introduce a 40 per cent quota for the underrepresented sex in all its decision-making bodies. Improved public awareness of sexism had led to an increase in complaints of gender stereotypes, particularly in advertisements.

61. A requirement for equal pay for equal work in the private sector had been introduced, and a system of coefficients was used to calculate the salaries of public sector workers, who also benefited from collective agreements. The gender pay gap in Croatia stood at 11 per cent, which was below the European average. A campaign was under way to encourage men to take fully paid paternity leave, which could not be transferred to the mother. Measures to improve the balance between parents' work and home lives included the promotion of remote working arrangements and government investment in the construction of more preschools.

62. Failures to respect gender quotas in public decision-making forums, including Parliament, were sanctioned by fines of up to €7,000. Political parties received support for each of their sitting members of elective bodies who were of the underrepresented sex. A code of conduct for companies in the private sector provided for gender quotas for their boards of directors, and observance of those quotas was monitored regularly. A civic education curriculum had been adopted that addressed gender inequality and gender stereotypes. A report had been prepared on the implementation of the gender equality action plan covering the period up to 2024, and another plan for the period up to 2027 would be drafted in early 2025.

63. **A representative of Croatia** said that pregnancies could be terminated in hospitals that were authorized to perform such procedures. While gynaecologists had the right to conscientious objection to the procedure, they must provide a written declaration to that effect and refer patients to another gynaecologist in the same hospital. If all gynaecologists within a hospital expressed a conscientious objection to abortion, the hospital was required to hire another doctor or refer patients to another facility. Of the 29 hospitals authorized to carry out abortions, 4 did not employ any gynaecologists willing to perform them; 3 of those hospitals used the services of external doctors, and the other referred patients to other hospitals.

64. Reproductive health-care services were distributed evenly across the country. The number of gynaecology teams was increasing, and a significant effort was being made to overcome the lack of specialist doctors, including through training funded by the European Union. Helicopter and speed boat services afforded women in remote and island areas access to emergency health care. Migrants were entitled to emergency health care, and vulnerable migrants, including children and pregnant and post-partum women, had access to all health-care services. The Ministry of Health had signed contracts with health services to provide care in reception centres housing migrants with an irregular status.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*