



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
7 October 2024

Original: English

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Seventy-sixth session

Summary record of the 37th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 12 September 2024, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Crăciunean-Tatu

Contents

Consideration of reports:

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

Fourth periodic report of Kyrgyzstan

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.



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

Consideration of reports:

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

*Fourth periodic report of Kyrgyzstan (E/C.12/KGZ/4; E/C.12/KGZ/Q/4;
E/C.12/KGZ/RQ/4)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Kyrgyzstan joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that the Government was constantly striving to improve national legislation to ensure that it aligned with the country's international human rights obligations. More than 85 per cent of the legislative initiatives introduced in 2023 and 2024 had been aimed at protecting the rights of women and children, and there had been a significant increase in the number of programmes supporting the rehabilitation and integration of persons with disabilities.
3. Since the introduction of measures such as a labour-market information system, the level of unemployment had fallen to 5.3 per cent, some 236,000 unemployed persons had been placed in jobs, and almost 60,000 people had undergone vocational training. In February 2024, Kyrgyzstan had ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), demonstrating its commitment to protecting human rights in the workplace.
4. Significant progress had been made in the areas of public health and social protection, including an 18 per cent reduction in maternal mortality in 2022, better access to subsidized medicines for socially vulnerable groups, the expansion of programmes for the treatment of psychoactive drug abuse, and increases in the monthly social benefits granted to children and persons with disabilities. Legislation on pensions and social insurance had also been amended. In compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Accessible Country programme had been launched and the job placement system for persons with disabilities had been improved.
5. The Social Contract project supported 6,000 low-income families by providing financial assistance and promoting the development of small businesses, thereby reducing poverty and social inequality in the country. The population's housing needs were being met thanks to the creation of a number of government housing programmes and the State Mortgage Company, which had issued more than 2,800 mortgages for a total of almost 7 billion soms. The national food security programme covered 40 per cent of the population and had been expanded to provide medical assistance to vulnerable groups.
6. A major step forward in criminal law had been the decriminalization of the use of narcotic drugs without a medical prescription, which had facilitated the rehabilitation and social integration of affected persons. The implementation of a remediation programme for uranium legacy sites underscored the State's commitment to meeting environmental standards.
7. A support and development programme for the period 2022–2026 was being implemented to promote entrepreneurship among women. More than 1,600 women had been trained in sought-after occupations, and four modern training and production complexes had been established. In the area of preschool education, a pilot project carried out in 2023 had led to the registration of more than 200 individual entrepreneurs and the opening of more than 30 home-based kindergartens attended by over 4,000 children; the programme was being scaled up to the national level.
8. With the support of international partners, the State had successfully repatriated more than 60 citizens from Syria and Turkey and provided medical examinations and rehabilitation for 79 children from conflict zones in Iraq. The State strove to implement a balanced language policy and to build a new trilingual generation of Kyrgyz citizens while preserving the first languages of ethnic communities. Kyrgyzstan was committed to a policy of non-discrimination and had developed a national strategy on civic identity aimed at strengthening inter-ethnic harmony and the preservation of cultural diversity, including through the

adoption of laws and regulations and the organization of seminars, training sessions and live broadcast events on inter-ethnic issues.

9. Combating corruption was a key priority in Kyrgyzstan. In 2023–2024, 55 pretrial proceedings on corruption had been registered, six of which had been referred to the courts. Damages in favour of the State in the amount of 5.4 billion soms had been successfully recovered. A “single window” information system and an eAccreditation digital platform had been introduced to increase the Government’s transparency and effectiveness.

10. In 2022, the State had adopted a number of programmes promoting gender equality, including the National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality for the period up to 2030, the National Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality for the period 2022–2024, and the State programme on women’s leadership for the period up to 2030. A gender quota of 30 per cent had been established for parliamentary and local elections. At the 2021 local government elections, the proportion of women among local deputies had reached 38 per cent. To enhance the support provided by the 19 existing State-funded crisis centres to victims of domestic violence, it was planned to open a one-stop centre in Bishkek.

11. **Mr. Caunhye** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would like to know what steps had been taken to give full effect to the Covenant rights in domestic legislation and to ensure their primacy. He would like to obtain further details of the mechanisms that enabled citizens to obtain effective judicial remedies for violations of their Covenant rights, and an updated list of recent cases in which the Covenant rights had been enforced by the courts.

12. He would be grateful for information on the measures taken to protect human rights defenders, journalists, activists and representatives of civil society organizations from undue harassment, intimidation or reprisals and to ensure the prompt investigation and prosecution of such cases. He wished to know what action had been taken to repeal the so-called law on foreign representatives and the law on non-commercial organizations, and how the State party would ensure that the draft laws on mass media and on bloggers did not unduly restrict freedom of expression and reporting.

13. He would be curious to learn what mechanisms were in place to guarantee that the Constitutional Court and the judiciary operated in an independent manner, and that the security of tenure and the appointment of judges were free from political influence or interference. He wondered whether the State party would consider amending the constitutional act that allowed for decisions of the Constitutional Court to be reviewed and quashed. He would also like to know whether the necessary legal safeguards would be put in place to allow the Ombudsman to discharge his or her functions in an independent and effective manner, with adequate financial and human resources.

14. He would welcome further information on the steps taken to adopt a comprehensive legal framework that would ensure that all business entities exercised human rights due diligence, as well as a national action plan on business and human rights that implemented the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. He wondered what measures had been taken to protect biosphere zones from mining and to tackle the damaging effects of mining activities on the environment and affected communities. He would like to hear more about measures taken to address industrial pollution and soil contamination, to carry out human rights and environmental impact assessments and monitoring, and to organize consultations with local communities and civil society organizations. What judicial and institutional remedies were available to individuals whose Covenant rights had been violated by business entities?

15. It would be useful to know what had been the impact of measures taken to meet the nationally determined contributions for reducing emissions. He wondered what specific measures had been taken to address and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, particularly by vulnerable groups; to strengthen preparedness for and response to natural disasters; and to provide for disaster risk reduction, with sufficient allocation of financial resources.

16. The Committee wished to obtain information on measures taken to eradicate poverty; to increase targeted financial assistance for vulnerable groups; to increase public expenditure and budgetary resource allocations in relation to health, education and social security

benefits; and to rationalize its fiscal policy and reduce wide income disparities and unequal distribution of wealth.

17. He would be grateful for further details of the steps taken to establish a comprehensive anti-discrimination legal framework; to combat all forms of discrimination, stigmatization, hate crime and hate speech against vulnerable groups; and to ensure equal rights to same-sex couples. He wondered how the State party intended to strengthen gender parity at all the higher levels of government and decision-making and to address any barriers preventing women from obtaining such positions. What measures, both legal and institutional, were in place to ensure gender equality in the enjoyment of social and cultural rights?

The meeting was suspended at 3.35 p.m. and resumed at 3.45 p.m.

18. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that amendments to the constitutional act on the Ombudsman were being drafted to align the law with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), in consultation with representatives of the United Nations, the European Union and civil society. Following a review, the draft law would be submitted to parliament.

19. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that, under the law on non-governmental organizations, around 2,000 organizations receiving funding from abroad would be registered on a separate register for the purpose of ensuring transparency. No persecution would follow. Non-governmental organizations that wished to participate in politics should create a political party.

20. The right of the mass media to operate freely was enshrined in the Constitution. The rapid growth in communications technology over recent years meant that the existing Media Act, which had been designed with traditional media outlets in mind, required significant amendment in order to accommodate online media. The amendments proposed, which did not seek to restrict media activity in any way, were being reviewed by journalists and other civil society stakeholders, and a bill was due to come before parliament the following month. Bloggers were not covered by the proposals; the question of how to govern their activity would be addressed once the amendments to the Media Act had been enacted.

21. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that Kyrgyzstan had ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The rights envisaged therein – such as equality before the law for all persons and the prohibition of discrimination on any grounds – were also the ethical norms of society, enshrined in the Constitution and the law. Those provisions were equally applicable to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. All citizens had the right to live a life free from violence, including violence based on gender identity, and to freedom of peaceful assembly. Each year, a march to celebrate women's rights was held in Bishkek on 8 March.

22. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that the right to sustainable development in a clean and healthy environment was upheld in the Constitution. Acting on that constitutional mandate, the Government had enacted a series of laws governing land, water, natural resources and environmental safety. Working with international organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Green Climate Fund, the Government was also developing a national climate change adaptation plan, particularly for the southern regions of the country, as well as four specific sectoral plans and eight pilot projects. More than 430 million soms was disbursed annually from the statutory insurance fund to ensure that vulnerable categories of the population could obtain subsidized medicines, in some cases with reductions of up to 90 per cent.

23. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that the Government had engaged with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on projects to reduce the risk associated with radioactive waste on the national territory. Targeted initiatives focused on the rehabilitation of specific areas, such as the former uranium complex in Mailuu-Suu. Assessments of the environmental impact of industrial and mining activities were carried out by the Government, as well as by civil society organizations.

24. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that the State budget was socially oriented, and social protection – including pensions, health care, education and protection against poverty

– accounted for more than half of all public spending. Although pensions had been increased the previous year, a significant amount of public spending was also directed towards other areas of social protection in order to foster economic growth. Moreover, public spending on health care, which had risen during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, had since been readjusted. Fiscal policy was calibrated to promote the well-being and prosperity of the population. Tax benefits, which amounted to 6 per cent of gross domestic product, were aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, ensuring food security and supporting vulnerable categories such as persons with disabilities, military veterans and families in need. Through tax reductions and tax breaks, business support programmes led to the creation of new jobs and also helped to reduce poverty. A presidential decree issued in January 2024 sought to improve the country's investment climate and to regulate the activity of companies, while avoiding any government overreach into business activities.

25. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that a recently launched programme envisaged the provision of support and training to women who aspired to occupy leadership positions and decision-making roles. Women currently accounted for just under 15 per cent of members of the Government, and they occupied 20 of the 90 seats in parliament. Women had also been appointed as presidential envoys, and the current Ombudsperson was a woman. According to the procedure laid down by constitutional law, judges of local courts were appointed by the President, on a proposal by the National Council of Justice, initially for a period of five years.

26. **Mr. Caunhye** said that the Committee specifically wished to know whether the State party was contemplating legislation to regulate businesses, including foreign business entities, to ensure that they implemented the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and exercised human rights due diligence in the conduct of their operations. He wondered what steps were being taken to address the gross underrepresentation of women in government. He would appreciate it if the delegation could provide specific details about instances where women had been appointed to high-level decision-making positions. He would also be grateful for information about any action to reduce the existing wage gap between men and women and to tackle the overrepresentation of women in low-paid and informal work. Lastly, he looked forward to hearing about the impact of the measures the Government had taken to meet its nationally determined contributions for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, in accordance with the Paris Agreement.

27. **Mr. Nonthasoot** (Country Task Force) said that he wished to know to what extent civil society organizations were fully and meaningfully involved in the development of the country's national development strategy. Human rights due diligence by business entities needed to be mandatory. In that connection, he wished to know what steps had been taken to place the 37 companies listed on the Kyrgyz Stock Exchange and the 136 State-owned enterprises under a legal obligation to exercise such diligence.

28. **Mr. Fiorio Vaesken** said that the Committee had been happy to learn that the periodic report had been discussed with civil society organizations, and he wished to know what form that discussion had taken. He hoped the delegation could share information about the composition of the Human Rights Coordination Council and explain what role it played in the implementation of human rights recommendations. He wondered whether the Government intended to introduce a single comprehensive law to define and prohibit all forms of discrimination within a legal and institutional framework that allowed victims to report violations and obtain redress. The Committee had recommended the adoption of such a law in its previous concluding observations (E/C.12/KGZ/CO/2-3), and the State party had undertaken to do so during the third cycle of the universal periodic review in 2020.

29. **Ms. Rossi** (Country Task Force) said that a law passed in 2023, which aimed to prohibit the distribution of information that refuted family values and social traditions or promoted non-traditional sexual relationships, risked undermining freedom of expression and exacerbating the already high levels of discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons in the State party. She wondered if any thought had been given to amending or abrogating that law. She wished to know exactly how much of the State budget had been allocated over recent years to sectors such as health care, education and social security. Could the delegation comment on reports the Committee had received to the effect that the taxation system, far from being a tool to promote well-being and human rights, was in fact regressive and inflexible?

30. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that government policy to create a pool of skilled workers would also help to increase the number of women capable of occupying leadership roles and present at the decision-making level. The 23-member Human Rights Coordination Council was headed by the deputy president of the Council of Ministers. It included representatives of various ministries and official bodies, as well as prosecutors, religious figures and a delegate from the Office of the Ombudsman. Kyrgyzstan would carry out further work to improve its existing anti-discrimination laws.

31. Minimum wages were calculated taking account of basic food needs, and the poverty threshold had been designated as a per capita monthly income of less than 2,237 soms. Families with children under 16 and a cumulative income that placed them below the threshold received assistance in the form of a monthly payment. The Social Contract project had been launched to help poor families boost their income. The project envisaged the disbursement of grants of up to \$1,190 to start small businesses. So far, 10,000 families, including 12,000 women, had been assisted by the project and it was planned to cover more than 20,000 children in 2024.

32. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that the nationally determined contributions for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions constituted a key part of the country's transformation to a low-carbon economy and its efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The State also had a programme that focused on specific environment-related issues such as biodiversity, agriculture and climate change mitigation. Action plans for climate change adaptation and mitigation focusing on the south of the country were being drawn up. In the capital, the Government was supporting a move from coal to gas as a heating fuel and promoting the introduction of electric buses.

33. The business environment was regulated by the two Covenants and by the ILO conventions that Kyrgyzstan had ratified, including the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). Kyrgyzstan was also the first country in the region to ratify the ILO Safety and Health in Agriculture Recommendation, 2001 (No. 192). At the domestic level, the rights of workers were enshrined in the Constitution, the Labour Code and other laws that aimed to combat workplace discrimination. Under those laws, companies could be held liable for any damage or violations they committed. Large corporations that operated in Kyrgyzstan, notably in the mining sector, applied a human rights-based approach to labour conditions and the transparency of their supply chains. They also sought to pursue sustainable development and to protect the local environment and communities in the areas where they worked.

34. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that direct and indirect discrimination in the labour market was prohibited under the Act on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women. Section 19 of the Act provided that men and women with similar qualifications and working in equal conditions should receive equal pay, and that deducting pay or worsening working conditions on the basis of a worker's gender was considered gender-based discrimination.

35. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that the issue of civil society organizations had been discussed during public hearings in the national parliament and at meetings of parliamentary commissions. Any persons interested in the matter had had the opportunity to receive responses to their questions in those forums.

36. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that the new Tax Code had been adopted in 2022 and amendments to the Code were usually made once a year. A working group composed of public and private sector representatives had been established within the Ministry of Economic Affairs to discuss changes to the taxation system, and a draft bill on amendments to the Code would be submitted to parliament in due course.

37. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that when draft legislation was being prepared, its text was published on a publicly accessible website so that citizens could read it and submit proposals to the relevant State body, which was obliged to review those proposals and decide whether or not to incorporate them into the text.

38. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that the recently adopted Act on Protection of Children from Harmful Information contained measures for monitoring television, radio and

social networks for harmful content. The Act had recently been invoked in a case where a television station had broadcast a cartoon featuring inappropriate content early in the morning, resulting in a caution and a fine for the station.

39. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that, under the Labour Code, salaries were set in accordance with workers' qualifications and the quantity and quality of the work carried out, without regard for their gender.

40. **Ms. Rossi** said that she was interested in hearing about any measures taken in response to the increase in the economically inactive population; in particular, she would like to know how the adoption of the Employment Promotion Act and the programme to promote employment for the period 2022–2026 had contributed to job creation. She wished to learn about any specific measures taken to address the challenges in creating jobs for women, young people, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees and LGBTIQ+ persons, as well as the impact of such measures. and to hear about how the Employment Promotion Act and the employment promotion programme 2022–2026 had helped to reduce unemployment among those groups. She wondered how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected unemployment among the most vulnerable groups, including migrants and workers in the informal economy living in urban and semiurban areas. She wished to know what policies had been adopted to remedy the loss of employment among those groups, and what had been the outcomes of those policies. It would be useful to hear about measures taken to bridge the gap between the skills possessed by workers and labour-market needs, and to provide suitable training to unemployed and underemployed persons and informal workers.

41. She would welcome information on specific measures taken to address the gender gap in the active population and in the labour market, as well as the gender pay gap and the overrepresentation of women in part-time work. She would be grateful to learn about any measures adopted to combat gender roles in the division of labour, especially with respect to the non-remunerated domestic and care work often carried out by women. The delegation might also wish to provide information on policies to increase representation of women in leadership positions.

42. She would appreciate information on employment and unemployment rates among persons with disabilities, as well as on any measures taken to improve their working conditions and employment opportunities and the impact of those measures; in particular, it would be helpful to hear about steps taken to ensure the effective implementation of the 5 per cent quota of employees with disabilities, especially in the public sector. She wondered what percentage of companies had implemented the quota and whether that figure was increasing. It would be interesting to hear about measures taken to enable asylum-seekers to enjoy the right to work and about any plans to eliminate the requirement to obtain a work permit.

43. Information on the State party's efforts to tackle informal work would be welcome. She would be grateful to learn whether the 2018–2022 development programme or any other plans provided for the establishment of a formalization mechanism, to facilitate equal access to the formal labour market for disadvantaged groups. She would welcome further information on the implementation and impact of measures taken to help small and medium-sized enterprises to formalize their operations, such as the Act on the State Social Insurance Contributions Rate. It would be interesting to hear about measures taken to combat forced labour, including through international cooperation, and about the impact of those measures. In the light of reports of poor working conditions in the agriculture, mining and construction sectors and the informal economy, as well as the prevalence of occupational disease, injury and death in those industries, she would like to know how the State party was working to improve the situation and was keen to receive details about the labour inspection system. The delegation might wish to report on measures taken to ensure that the working conditions of migrant workers and refugees were in conformity with the Covenant, and on the impact of such measures in addressing labour exploitation, abuse and intimidation.

44. It would be helpful to hear about steps taken to align legislation on the protection of trade union rights with the Covenant. In particular, information on the current status of the draft law on trade unions would be appreciated, as would details of measures taken to ensure its compatibility with the Covenant and to involve all workers' organizations and civil society organizations in its development and adoption. The Committee would be grateful for

information on laws and measures adopted to protect trade union members and leaders, especially those defending the rights of mining workers, from persecution, judicial harassment and detention and to allow them to carry out their functions freely and effectively without risk to their lives or physical integrity.

45. She wished to learn how the State party was working to close gaps in the retirement pension system, and how the application of the pension indexing mechanism provided for in the State Pension Social Insurance Act ensured that beneficiaries could enjoy an adequate standard of living. Lastly, she would welcome updated figures on the proportion of old-age pensioners receiving pensions below the subsistence level, and she wished to know how the State party intended to increase the amount that they received.

The meeting was suspended at 4.50 p.m. and resumed at 5 p.m.

46. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that, since 2015, the economically active population had increased from 2.5 million to 2.67 million and the overall unemployment rate had fallen from 7.6 per cent to 4.9 per cent. The unemployment rate among women had also fallen from 9 per cent to 6 per cent, and the youth unemployment rate had decreased from 11 per cent to 8 per cent. Unemployed persons were provided with access to vocational training with a view to meeting labour-market demands. Within the Social Contract project, the Government had provided assistance to more than 12,000 low-income families and had created an enabling environment for small and medium-sized enterprises. Over 18,000 jobs had been created in the previous two years, and it was planned to create a further 25,000 in 2024. Since 2015, the number of people employed in the service sector had increased by 5.5 per cent, and the number of employees in the construction sector had risen by 21 per cent.

47. Workers were assured of equal pay for equal work. Differences in pay were attributable to differences in conditions, such as work done in hazardous conditions or work carried out at night, on weekends or on public holidays.

48. Some 1,698,000 people had been working in the informal sector in 2022. A soft loan scheme had been created. To incentivize formalization among employers, the Government had decided in 2024 to offer three-year interest-free loans of up to 200,000 soms.

49. There were currently more than 216,000 persons with disabilities in Kyrgyzstan, including 37,800 children and more than 40,000 persons with disabilities from childhood. As at January 2024, around 129,000 persons with disabilities had been in receipt of disability pensions through the Social Fund. In general, beneficiaries of social benefit payments received an average amount of 6,325 soms, whereas children receiving a disability pension received an average amount of 8,000 soms and adults with disabilities received an average of 7,920 soms. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was being implemented in Kyrgyzstan. The Accessible Country programme, an initiative designed to support persons with disabilities and reduced mobility in the period 2023–2030, was also being rolled out, as was an action plan for its implementation in 2023–2026, which had six priority areas for action. The Council for Persons with Disabilities had been established in 2020 to facilitate cooperation between State bodies, local authorities and civil society organizations in addressing the social protection of persons with disabilities. The Council was chaired by the head of the Cabinet of Ministers and was composed of 15 representatives of government bodies and 18 representatives of civil society organizations, which ensured that persons with disabilities were involved in decision-making.

50. Labour inspectors systematically monitored conformity with labour legislation, including the Labour Code, as well as with the ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), and it was mandatory for employers to comply with their decisions. In 2023, 1,237 inspections had been carried out and 2,613 violations of labour laws had been identified, resulting in the issuance of 624 decisions. Mandatory investigations of 171 occupational incidents had been carried out, in which 186 casualties had been reported, including 105 serious injuries and 81 deaths. Labour inspectors had participated in 70 court hearings, including as expert consultants.

51. Although the number of positions under the quota system for persons with disabilities had increased by 112 per cent in recent years, only 30 per cent of those persons were in employment. An analysis of the situation had revealed that not all companies and

organizations that had set aside a percentage of positions for persons with disabilities had managed to fill those positions, because many persons with disabilities refused to take certain jobs owing to the low wages offered. In addition, some employers had decided not to set quotas for higher-paid positions requiring specialist skills or expertise, as they could not offer appropriate working conditions for persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities continued to encounter difficulties in travelling to work on public transport. An amendment to the Labour Code had been drafted in order to address those challenges and had been submitted for consideration by parliament.

52. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that a number of significant reforms to the pension system had been made between 2021 and 2024 to improve conditions for pensioners, including the launch of the pension indexing mechanism in July 2024 to adjust the purchasing power of pensions in line with inflation and wage increases. The procedure for confirming insurance status had been simplified, which facilitated the process of calculating pensions, and the digital automation of pension system processes had made it easier for citizens to gain access to social services. The introduction of digitalized passports and birth certificates had streamlined interaction between the pension services and government bodies, and, since July 2024, it had been possible to file applications for pensions online. The Government was examining the feasibility of transferring some of the functions of the pension services to private companies, subject to security and oversight considerations. More than 1 million electronic signatures had been issued, accelerating the pension payment process.

53. A law amending certain legislative acts on taxation and social security had been adopted in July 2024. The standard social security contribution rate had been reduced from 27.25 per cent to 12.25 per cent, with 2.25 per cent to be paid by employers and 10 per cent to be paid by employees, a measure that had encouraged the formalization of informal workers.

54. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that the Act on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons was the main law concerning the prevention of economic exploitation and trafficking in persons. A system had been established to provide assistance to victims of trafficking, as part of the Government Programme to Combat Trafficking in Persons for the period 2017–2020. State bodies responsible for preventing trafficking in persons had intensified their activities, and the institutional framework for coordinating interventions in that area had been strengthened at the national and local levels. The Government Programme to Combat Trafficking in Persons for the period 2022–2025 had been adopted, along with an action plan for its implementation. Trafficking in persons and related offences, such as unlawful deprivation of liberty, were criminal offences under the Criminal Code. Since the adoption of the latest version of the Criminal Code, the number of reports of offences related to trafficking in children had fallen. Guidance on combating trafficking in persons had been drawn up in cooperation with international partners, and educational materials on the topic had been developed for schools and other educational institutions. Training modules on investigating and prosecuting trafficking and on protecting the rights of victims had also been developed, and training seminars had been held for journalists and officials at relevant State bodies, ministries, the Prosecutor General's Office and local governments. Representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs had recently participated in a meeting of a regional law enforcement network to combat trafficking in persons and had held 14 training sessions on the subject for more than 1,000 attendees. Measures were being taken to tackle the increased use of information and communications technologies by perpetrators of trafficking crimes.

55. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that labour migration was governed by the External Labour Migration Act and the Act on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in the Kyrgyz Republic. An interministerial commission had met on several occasions in the previous year to discuss the recruitment of foreign workers. In the first nine months of 2024, 16,145 foreign specialists had been employed, while the quota for the year set by the Cabinet of Ministers was 25,000 persons.

56. The Government was committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, and more than 20,000 individuals had been granted international protection in the country. Actions taken with respect to refugees were governed by the 2002 Refugees Act and the 2003 regulations on working with refugees. The number of refugees in Kyrgyzstan had decreased

in recent years; that was indicative of the stabilization of the forced migration situation and a consequence of the successful implementation of national measures concerning the integration and repatriation of refugees. There had been a stable flow of asylum-seekers entering the country in the previous year.

57. An interdepartmental commission had been established to ensure that victims of trafficking in persons could receive social rehabilitation support at the local level. The information strategy for the prevention of trafficking in persons for the period 2024–2026 contained measures aimed at intensifying awareness-raising activities, with a view to preventing trafficking and forced labour.

58. The shadow economy contributed around 133 billion soms to the economy, which constituted around 23 per cent of gross domestic product. Two thirds of all small and medium-sized enterprises were located in Bishkek. Women made up just over 30 per cent of all persons employed in small enterprises, and that figure had fallen in most sectors in recent years. A national conference on entrepreneurship among women had been held in 2019, and a national programme to promote women's entrepreneurship was in development.

59. **Ms. Rossi** said that she would like to know whether the State party had used a particular mechanism to adjust the minimum wage in consideration of the subsistence level and what percentage of the population in employment were paid the minimum wage. It would also be helpful to hear about any measures taken to ensure that working people in receipt of the minimum wage had access to public services that could help them to maintain a decent standard of living. She wished to know whether all families with children who were living below the poverty line were covered by child allowance payments through the social protection system and how much was paid in child allowance, in particular in rural areas. She would appreciate information on progress made in the implementation of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, which provided for the establishment of pension rights for migrant workers from member States on an equal footing to nationals of the country where they were employed. Information on measures taken to introduce pension plans for Kyrgyz citizens working in other countries would also be welcome. She wondered whether the State party had plans to ratify the ILO Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), the ILO Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) and the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

60. **Mr. Windfuhr** said that, given the size of the informal sector in Kyrgyzstan and the fact that many informal workers lived in remote areas, he would welcome further details as to how the State party reached those workers and which population groups tended to join the informal sector. It would also be helpful to learn more about the challenges encountered by the State party with regard to formalization and its plans for future work in that area.

61. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that a monthly allowance of 1,200 soms per family member was paid to families with children under 16 if their household income was lower than the average minimum wage, which currently stood at 1,000 soms per family member. In 2024, around 83,000 families were in receipt of the monthly child allowance for low-income families. The Government was planning to gradually raise the minimum wage with a view to aligning it with the subsistence level. There were no official statistics on the minimum wage; however, the average monthly wage was the equivalent of \$312.

62. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that, between 2020 and 2023, the average pension paid to beneficiaries had risen from 5,894 soms to 8,976 soms. The sector in which the largest number of informal workers were employed was the garment industry.

63. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that all children under 18 were covered by the national social security scheme and received necessary medical care free of charge. All children were entitled to receive State welfare benefits, and significant efforts had been made to identify undocumented children in order to ensure that they could enjoy that right. To that end, the Government had integrated all records of hospital and home births reported to the Ministry of Health with records held by the Civil Registry Office in order to detect any anomalies in the data. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development was working on the ground to help those children to obtain the documentation required to gain access to State benefits, which in turn was enabling the Government to make plans regarding the provision of welfare.

64. **A representative of Kyrgyzstan** said that child allowances paid to families living in rural areas were calculated on the basis of a regional coefficient, and the average amount paid to families living in mountainous areas and hard-to-reach locations was 1,360 soms. An agreement on pension support for workers in the Eurasian Economic Union had entered into force in January 2021. Its purpose was to establish reciprocal pension rights for citizens of member States on an equal footing with nationals of the country in which they were employed. Similar agreements had been made with other countries, including Türkiye.

65. **Mr. Nonthasoot** said that he would welcome detailed comments from the delegation on the prevalence of domestic violence and harmful practices perpetrated against women and girls, especially early marriage, forced marriage and bride kidnapping, and on the lack of legal protections afforded to women in unregistered marriages. He was interested in learning about policies developed by the State party with the aim of mitigating, preventing and prosecuting cases of economic exploitation of children. He would appreciate clarification concerning the lack of affordable housing in the country and the inadequate development of social housing. He would like to know more about the State party's policy on the establishment of legal protections against forced evictions. It would be helpful to receive information on plans to make safe drinking water available to all; in particular, he would like to hear about the development of any time-bound measures and any expected increases in expenditure that would result from such measures.

66. He wished to know how the State party planned to mitigate the disproportionate impact of rising poverty on disadvantaged and marginalized populations. Since the country's economic model depended on the extractive and tourism sectors and remittances from migrant workers, it would be useful to hear how the Government intended to respond in the short and medium terms to challenges posed to those sources of income by the impact of geopolitical risks. He would welcome information on policies developed to tackle growing food insecurity and wondered whether the State party planned to address the impact of climate change on agricultural land and natural resources independently or in cooperation with partners, such as neighbouring countries or international organizations.

67. He would be grateful for the delegation's views on the underfunding of the health sector and the resulting inadequacy of physical and mental health facilities and services, the lack of qualified medical workers and the high cost of health care, which disproportionately affected LGBTIQ+ persons, persons with disabilities and persons living with HIV/AIDS. It would be helpful to receive clear information on the State party's response to the country's high maternal mortality rates and the challenges faced by adolescents seeking confidential reproductive health services. Lastly, he would like to know how far the State party planned to use domestic funding to sustain drug harm reduction programmes and whether a budget had already been allocated to such programmes.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.