



**International Convention on  
the Elimination of All Forms  
of Racial Discrimination**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**  
**114th session**

**Summary record of the 3120th meeting**

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 3 December 2024, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Balcerzak

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*Combined twelfth to fourteenth periodic reports of Armenia (continued)*

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

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

*Combined twelfth to fourteenth periodic reports of Armenia (continued)*  
([CERD/C/ARM/12-14](#); [CERD/C/ARM/Q/12-14](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Armenia joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** (Country Rapporteur), noting that liability for hate speech had been prescribed under the 2020–2022 action plan to implement the human rights strategy, said that he wished to know whether such liability would entail, for example, cumulative criminal, civil and administrative penalties or redress for multiple offences. He would be interested to hear about any particular cases in which such redress had been obtained.
3. He would be grateful to hear the delegation’s comments on the observations made by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance on the new legislation on hate speech adopted by the Government of Armenia. In particular, he would like to know whether the delegation agreed with the Commission’s view that provisions relating to aggravating circumstances did not cover discrimination on the grounds of language or citizenship; that data on hate speech and hate crimes were sparse and might not fully reflect the extent of the problem; that Armenia still lacked a comprehensive system for tracking hate speech and crimes; that intolerance towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people remained predominant; and that sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics were not explicitly included in the grounds of discrimination prohibited by the Constitution or any other legislation. He wondered whether any measures were being taken to address those shortcomings, including any steps to improve the monitoring and collection of data on acts of hate speech and hate crimes.
4. The State party’s report cited a number of cases in which legal action had been taken under article 226 of the Criminal Code, which related to the incitement to national, racial or religious hostility ([CERD/C/ARM/12-14](#), para. 55). He wished to know whether the defendant in one case, A.A., had been identified as the person acting under the pseudonym Dukhov Hayastan, whose Facebook page spread false information and incited national hostility, according to the State party report, and what the State party understood by the term “the absence of *corpus delicti*”, the grounds on which the court had dismissed the case in question. In view of the number of cases in which persons accused of incitement to hatred had successfully entered a plea of insanity, it would be interesting to know whether such pleas were being used as a pretext by persons wishing to escape justice.
5. He would be interested to hear about any measures being taken by the State party to comply with the Committee’s recommendation to improve access to justice for minorities in cases involving discrimination ([CERD/C/ARM/CO/7-11](#), paras. 13 and 14). He wondered whether any legal action had been brought by individuals in cases of racial discrimination, whether legal aid was made available for such legal actions, and, if so, whether the applicants were required to meet any particular criteria. It would be interesting to know the number of cases of racial discrimination in which the complainant had received legal aid and whether any progress had been made in reversing the burden of proof in cases of discrimination.
6. The Committee would welcome information on any measures taken to comply with its recommendations that the State party should register, investigate and prosecute cases of hate speech, sanctioning those responsible, and introduce a separate definition and prohibition of hate crime in its criminal law ([CERD/C/ARM/CO/7-11](#), para. 11). Given that three of the four cases of hate speech cited in the State party’s report had involved content posted on Facebook, he wished to know whether the State party would establish agreements with social media companies to monitor and remove content containing hate speech or inciting hatred and violence.
7. According to the latest report on Armenia issued by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, the term “Armenian identity” was often misused to justify intolerance towards minorities and harmful rhetoric was directed at “Azeris” and “Turks”. In view of the that situation, he would appreciate information on any steps being taken to

promote an atmosphere of tolerance and to prevent the concept of national identity from being used to justify intolerance. He would appreciate the delegation's comments on reports that a Georgian national had been prevented from leaving an aircraft after an emergency landing at the Zvartnots International Airport in Yerevan because she was of Azerbaijani origin.

8. The Committee would welcome information on any measures taken to ensure that members of all ethnic and ethno-religious groups were able to enjoy their civil and political rights without being harassed by law enforcement officers. He would be interested to hear about any progress made in implementing the police certification process, under which all police officers must undergo an examination of their knowledge, discipline and behaviour as a precondition for remaining in the police force. It would be useful to learn whether any sanctions had been handed down to officers who fell short of the required standards. Lastly, he wondered why no civil society organizations had participated in the preparation of the State party's report and whether such organizations feared being subjected to reprisals if they criticized the Government.

9. **A representative of Armenia** said that the Government was engaged in combating all kinds of hate speech and hate crimes and fostering good relations with neighbouring countries. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Armenia were not subjected to threats and any claim to the contrary was groundless and indicative of a failure to understand the context of the country.

10. No NGO had submitted an alternative report to the Committee either because there were no government-organized NGOs that could have submitted such a report or because the relevant NGOs were satisfied with the Government's policies. The Georgian national mentioned by the Country Rapporteur had had not been prevented from leaving the aircraft after it had made an emergency stop in Armenia. The passenger had remained on the aircraft after it had landed because she had not wished to join the others who had expressed readiness to go through passport control in order to stay in or leave the airport. Therefore, she had had no contact with any Armenian authority. Some Armenian citizens had expressed their dissatisfaction with the actions of the Government of Israel but that did not mean that they were antisemitic. In fact, Jewish organizations in Armenia had stated that the country was safe for Jews to visit.

11. **A representative of Armenia** said that article 329 of the Criminal Code prohibited public speech that incited or advocated hatred, discrimination, intolerance or hostility towards individuals or groups on the basis of their racial, national, ethnic or social origins, religion, political or other views and any other personal or social characteristics. The Criminal Code also established that it was an offence to disseminate materials or objects for the purpose of inciting or advocating such hatred, discrimination, intolerance or hostility. Article 330 prohibited public calls for violence, the justification or advocacy of violence and the dissemination of materials or objects promoting such acts. The denial of genocide was also established as an offence.

12. Under the Criminal Code, legal entities established in Armenia or abroad could be held criminally liable for any offences attributable to them. It was considered to be an aggravating circumstance if a call for violence was made by an organized group. Public organizations could be dissolved by a court if they were found to have engaged in illegal activities, including the incitement to hatred or the promotion of violence or war. In such cases, an entity could be prevented from engaging in unlawful activities without criminal proceedings being brought.

13. Legislative measures would be taken to shift the burden of proof in cases relating to discrimination. Under the proposed amendments to the law, plaintiffs were required to present proof of discriminatory acts, omissions, attitudes or regulations, while defendants bore responsibility for proving that no discrimination had occurred. The proposed amendments would bring national law into alignment with the recommendations set out in general policy recommendation No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination, issued by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. With regard to the cases in which persons accused of hate speech had been excused from criminal responsibility by reason of insanity, it should be noted that the rights of the accused persons had been upheld under the Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

14. **A representative of Armenia** said that, under the Convention and other legal instruments, the Government of Armenia was required to protect the rights of persons under its jurisdiction, as well as stateless persons and ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh. Since 2021, Nagorno-Karabakh had been blockaded, the ethnic Armenian population had been deprived of food and essential utilities and a significant number of ethnic Armenians had left the region. Those events were the direct consequence of the systematic anti-Armenian sentiment and propaganda promoted by the most senior members of the Government of Azerbaijan.

15. The matters in question had been raised before the International Court of Justice, which had issued a total of eight provisional measures against Azerbaijan. In an order issued in December 2021, the Court had directed Azerbaijan to “take all necessary measures to prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred and discrimination, including by its officials and public institutions, targeted at persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin”. The Court had emphasized that propaganda promoting racial hatred and incitement to racial discrimination could have a profoundly harmful effect on individuals belonging to the protected group, resulting in physical harm, psychological distress or both. It had further emphasized that such damaging effects were a matter of particular concern when rhetoric inciting racial discrimination originated from high-ranking State officials.

16. Although the International Court of Justice had directed Azerbaijan to take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration affecting Armenian cultural heritage, Azerbaijan continued to target that heritage through such actions as altering the identity of Armenian churches and failing to hold persons who vandalized that heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh accountable. Given that the International Court of Justice had indicated provisional measures to address hate speech and anti-Armenian propaganda in Azerbaijan and that there was massive evidence that ethnic Armenians had been mistreated and killed on racially discriminatory grounds, it was doubtful whether Azerbaijan was complying with the order on provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice on 17 November 2023 that it protect from violence and bodily harm all persons who had been captured in relation to the 2020 conflict who remained in detention and assure their security and equality before the law. Armenia was of the view that full compliance with the Convention was essential for fostering peace and stability in the region.

17. Armenia – which, since ratifying the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) in 2002, had had a well-established and highly functional framework for implementing judgments of the European Court of Human Rights – had to date not had any judgments concerning violation of article 14 of the Convention regarding racial discrimination issued against it.

18. **A representative of Armenia** said that significant achievements had been made in the implementation of a number of priority measures under the Police Reform Strategy and Action Plan 2020–2022 – in which both civil society organizations and international partners had been involved – despite the difficulties caused by the state of emergency and the state of war that had existed in the country in 2020. One such achievement was the re-establishment of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2022, which now included the Police, the Rescue Service and the Migration and Citizenship Service. The structure of the police force was being transformed in order to focus on four main areas: combating crime, conducting patrols, providing security and policing communities. Implementation of the Police Reform Strategy had had a direct impact on all segments of society, significantly increasing public safety and, as a result, public trust in the police force. According to a survey conducted by the International Republican Institute, 62 per cent of members of the public were satisfied with the performance of the police force, while according to a survey commissioned by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the police force was trusted by 72 per cent of respondents.

19. **Mr. Kut** said that, given that it was unclear whether, in line with article 4 (b) of the Convention, far right, ultranationalist groups and parties in Armenia were subject to the requirement under the Criminal Code that organizations that promoted and incited racial discrimination were to be declared illegal and prohibited, he wished to know whether the Government had a strategy for addressing the challenges and dangers that such groups and parties posed to the successful implementation of government policies – especially in relation

to the ongoing peace process with Azerbaijan – and would be grateful to receive any relevant examples.

20. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that she would like to know what measures, if any, had been taken by the Government to strengthen the position of civil society organizations and to encourage such organizations to engage with the human rights treaty bodies. Given that the delegation had stated that the European Court of Human Rights had not thus far issued any judgments against Armenia regarding violations of article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, she wondered why the State party had not yet made the optional declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention recognizing the competence of the Committee to receive and consider individual complaints.

21. **Ms. Tlakula** (Follow-up Coordinator) said that in its follow-up report ([CERD/C/ARM/CO/7-11/Add.1](#)), the State party had provided some information on its implementation of the recommendation made by the Committee in its concluding observations ([CERD/C/ARM/CO/7-11](#)) to take all steps necessary to facilitate access by minorities to justice, to disseminate information on legislation relating to racial discrimination and inform the population residing in its territory about all legal remedies available to them and of possibility of obtaining legal assistance. While the Committee noted the additional information in that regard provided by the State party in its periodic report, the State party had provided no information on measures taken by it to inform the population about racial discrimination and remedies available to victims of such discrimination, while the low number of prosecutions for racial discrimination reported in the periodic report suggested that the population might be inadequately informed about those subjects. The Committee was therefore of the view that its recommendation had only been partially implemented.

22. **Mr. Diaby** said that he wished to know why complaints related to hate crimes were investigated by a body other than the police force and whether the State party intended to make the police force responsible for dealing with such complaints, as it had been previously. He wondered why no judicial decision issued thus far appeared to make reference to article 226 of the Criminal Code regarding incitement to national, racial or religious hatred.

23. **A representative of Armenia** said that it was to be hoped that initiatives intended to improve connectivity and communication in the South Caucasus like the Crossroads of Peace project proposed by the Government would help to combat discrimination between peoples living in that region and beyond. While the Government took steps to prosecute any criminal actions committed by far right, ultranationalist groups and parties in Armenia, it favoured an approach based on dialogue – as it did in its relations with neighbouring States – in its efforts to combat racial discrimination and related challenges. The possibility of making the optional declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention would be examined and discussed by the Government.

24. The Government appreciated the importance of NGOs and the feedback provided by them and strove to engage with such organizations to the greatest extent possible. NGOs were extensively involved in the preparation of the Government's report for the upcoming universal periodic review of Armenia and a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for human rights was being established in which NGOs would have a permanent role. NGOs also had an established role in other formats for the discussion of human rights issues, for example in discussions with the European Union regarding implementation of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part. Such organizations – which were self-financed – were currently fully occupied with a number of pressing humanitarian issues in Armenia, such as assisting prisoners of war and refugees.

25. **A representative of Armenia** said that the Government worked continuously to amend legislation with a view to ensuring the rule of law. The protection of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community might be addressed in the draft law on ensuring legal equality. Any complaints related to hate crimes were received and first examined by the police force, following which, if such complaints met the threshold for a criminal case to be opened – which, under the new Code of Criminal Procedure, was very low – the case was

transferred to the Investigative Committee for investigation, while the police force remained involved in that process.

26. **A representative of Armenia** said that, in 2023 and 2024, training on combating hate speech and related crimes had been provided to police officers at the Ministry of Internal Affairs police academy. Nearly 300 police officers had participated in such courses since 2023 and nearly 130 police officers had participated in training sessions on racial discrimination conducted there during the same period. Such sessions had been organized for police officers and officials of the Ministry with the objectives of eradicating discrimination in all forms in police operations and enhancing the capacity of the police force to address discrimination and identify and prevent crimes driven by discrimination, hatred and racism in line with international standards. No investigations of incidents of racially motivated violence or hate speech by police officers by the Internal Security and Anti-Corruption Department had been conducted in 2024. Some 70 members of national minorities – including persons of Assyrian, Yazidi, Russian, Ukrainian, Greek and Kurdish origin – were employed at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. All police officers had to meet all of the requirements of certification processes in order to remain in the police force.

27. **A representative of Armenia** said that as part of the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection, measures to raise public awareness about the principles of equality and non-discrimination had been carried out that had included the distribution of related videos and other materials through the official website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport and various social media platforms.

28. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he had not heard an answer to the question raised earlier concerning the person accused of spreading false information and inciting national hostility on Facebook under the pseudonym of Dukhov Hayastan. The meaning of the term “absence of corpus delicti” – which had been cited in the State party’s report as grounds for dismissing the case – required clarification. He failed to understand why that person had not been prosecuted.

29. **A representative of Armenia** said that the Prime Minister, who had been dissatisfied with reforms of the justice system and had dismissed some heads of relevant organizations in connection with them, shared the Country Rapporteur’s opinion regarding that case.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.25 a.m. and resumed at 11.35 a.m.*

30. **Ms. Chung** (Country Task Force) said that she would welcome information on the numbers of migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons and internally displaced persons in the country and the measures taken to protect them and ensure their access to healthcare, employment, education and basic services. She would be interested to hear what had been done to address the reported discrimination in the granting of asylum status, mentioned by the Committee in its previous concluding observations. Information on reports of what appeared to be discrimination in the facilitated naturalization process, whereby applicants who were not ethnic Armenians were required to pass a constitutional knowledge test, would also be welcome.

31. It would be interesting to learn how the provisions of the Law on Refugees and Asylum providing for the non-penalization of actions such as illegal entry into the country were implemented. In view of two reported cases of deportations taking place while the applicants’ appeals were pending, she would like to hear if there had been any other such cases and whether the appeals process had suspensive effect. She wished to know how the State party intended to remedy the reported shortcoming in free legal assistance and translation services for asylum-seekers and the lack of any clear information on the process at border crossing points.

32. Reports indicated that lack of accommodation was a primary concern for refugees; it would be useful to know whether the State party had plans to improve capacity and conditions in the country’s only shelter for asylum-seekers and what progress was being made with the construction of a new shelter in Abovian, including provision for persons with disabilities.

33. An update on reports that, since January 2022, technical issues had prevented officials from disbursing the monthly financial allowance to refugees would be appreciated. It would be interesting to hear what measures were being taken to address the language barriers facing

asylum-seekers when accessing the online healthcare system. She would also welcome details of any integration programmes aimed at Armenian nationals returning from Western European countries.

34. The Committee would like updated information related to the temporary protected status of refugees who had arrived from the Nagorno-Karabakh region, their number, including how many did not have Armenian nationality, the legal status of the latter and whether they were at risk of statelessness. She wondered why the Committee had not received any reports from NGOs that supported those refugees.

35. She would welcome an update on the State party's plan to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. It would also be helpful to have details of planned measures to address discrimination against migrants seeking employment.

36. The Committee would like more information on the number, location and profile of stateless persons, persons at risk of statelessness and undocumented persons in the country, and the measures taken to prevent and protect against statelessness, including up-to-date statistics on those categories, in particular when they were also displaced persons. Further details of the content and status of the draft law concerning stateless persons would also be useful. Noting that the June 2022 amendment to the law on citizenship did not fully address the fundamental problems underlying statelessness, such as the need for proper identification and referral mechanisms, she said she would like to hear what was being done to resolve that situation.

37. She would welcome updated information on the measures taken to ascertain the fate of persons missing as a result of the hostilities in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, including what was being done to establish the planned independent fact-finding commission to investigate human rights violations committed between 1991 and 2018, with a mandate to investigate human rights violations resulting from racial or ethnic and religious discrimination. Such conflict and discrimination must be addressed immediately if lasting peace and tolerance, rather than generations of hatred, were to be established. It would also be helpful to hear about measures taken to conserve the cultural heritage of the region and to prevent acts of vandalism or destruction. An open dialogue with Azerbaijan in good faith was needed to bring about a lasting peace agreement.

38. Now that the State party had amended its Criminal Code to include war crimes, genocide and torture, and prohibit amnesty and any statute of limitations for those offences, and to introduce enforced disappearance as an autonomous crime, she would like to know whether it intended to introduce specific legislation to provide redress for human rights violations. It would also be helpful to hear about its plans to establish an independent mechanism to investigate violations of human rights, particularly those of minorities or committed on racial or ethnic grounds, and what had been done to improve the participation of such minority groups in the transitional justice process.

39. **A representative of Armenia** said that the probable reason why the NGOs supporting refugees from the Nagorno-Karabakh region had not submitted a report to the Committee was that, for over 10 months, they had been reporting that they were under blockade, lacked food and were deprived of their human rights, but nothing had been done to help them. Many of the vulnerable persons concerned had lost faith in the multilateral mechanisms and the international organizations. It had already been a year since the violations of the human rights of refugees from the Nagorno-Karabakh region had occurred and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had yet to publish a report on them.

40. **Ms. Chung** said that the Committee had received reports from NGOs on the Azerbaijani side but nothing from the Armenian side and would have welcomed information from Armenian NGOs in order to avoid imbalance and bias.

41. **A representative of Armenia** said that, prior to 2022, an average of 250 persons had applied for asylum in Armenia each year. Since then, the number had quadrupled, to 979 applications in 2022, of which 359 had been approved and 63 rejected; 815 applications in 2023, of which 372 had been approved and 157 rejected; and 554 applications to date

in 2024, of which 178 had been approved and 166 rejected. Most of the applicants were Ukrainians.

42. The 2008 law on refugees and asylum had added another five grounds for recognition as a refugee: massive violations of human rights, widespread violence, external attacks, internal conflicts and serious violations of public order. In line with chapter 2 of that law, asylum-seekers and refugees had the same rights and responsibilities as foreign nationals and stateless persons residing legally in the country, including the rights to own property, to undertake paid work and to enjoy freedom of movement. Persons granted asylum had the right to access social services, free healthcare, education and State benefits. Particular attention was paid to issues affecting child refugees, with the provision of support and care in their best interests. A draft amendment to the law currently under development took account of the requirements of persons with special needs.

43. Asylum-seekers were provided with accommodation during the application process. The new shelter, which could accommodate 150 individuals, had opened the previous week. If no accommodation was available, asylum-seekers were given financial assistance to cover their basic needs. Those who had already been recognized as refugees were able to benefit from integration programmes, which included a rental subsidy of 60,000 Armenian drams per month for six months. Translation services were always available, but might be difficult to access towards the end of the year because of increased demand; however, in that case, assistance would be provided by NGOs and international organizations.

44. The delegation would provide the Committee with written responses on the issue of stateless persons.

45. **A representative of Armenia** said that over 115,000 ethnic Armenians had been displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh following the military offensive by Azerbaijan, and an average of 20,000 had arrived in Armenia each day, amounting to the equivalent of more than 4 per cent of the country's population in one week. Of those displaced persons, 18 per cent were older persons, 66 per cent were women and children and 9 per cent were persons with disabilities.

46. After providing initial emergency support in the form of core relief items and psychological support, the Government had subsequently decided to transition to cash-support programmes and a comprehensive rental support programme, under which each of 100,000 beneficiaries received €120 per month. The total allocated thus far represented around €190 million; international partners and NGOs had contributed €15.5 million to the programmes.

47. The displaced population also had access to healthcare services, education and the national social protection system: around 16,200 refugee students were enrolled in public schools across the country and 4,000 had received education subsidies. Tuition was free throughout their education, contingent on academic progress. There were also 76,500 displaced persons registered with primary healthcare providers and entitled to referrals to hospital and other services. They benefited from social protection mechanisms on equal terms with Armenian citizens, and 28,600 were now covered by the national pension system. The hotline set up to address their questions had been strengthened in July 2024 with the recruitment of six operators fluent in the dialect spoken by that population.

48. The Government was now putting priority on making the transition from social assistance to income generation through employment, with support programmes for teachers and healthcare professionals, among others. Over 1,700 refugees had followed the upskilling and reskilling programme, which was to be expanded in 2025. More than 25,500 forcibly displaced persons were employed, self-employed or otherwise economically active, and their salaries were comparable to those of the rest of the workforce. Employment support would continue to be on the Government's agenda in the upcoming years.

49. The Government had approved the State support programme for refugees, catering for the needs of 20,000 families, under which each person would receive non-repayable housing certificates worth between €3,500 and €5,500 to help their families purchase or build homes, permitting them full ownership.



50. **Ms. Tlakula**, referring to the recommendations made in the previous concluding observations, said that she would be interested to know what progress had been made in ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. She would also like to hear more about the grounds on which a negative asylum decision could be appealed and to whom an appeal should be addressed. Lastly, she would like to know what civic orientation and language courses were available to refugees.

51. Additionally, she would welcome specific examples of the application of the new law on the audiovisual media and clarification as to whether it prohibited the broadcasting of information promoting racial discrimination or racial hatred. What contribution would it make to equality in the State party?

52. She would like to know whether the shortcomings in the collection of data on hate speech and hate crimes, noted in the 2023 report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance on Armenia, had been addressed and whether the State party had drawn up a comprehensive strategy for the collection of data on hate speech and hate crimes.

53. **Mr. Diaby** said that, in the light of reports received of the forcible return of asylum-seekers at the border, he would welcome information on the number of such cases and the grounds invoked for turning migrants back. He wondered what happened to those who were at risk of ill-treatment if returned to their own country or to an unsafe third country. Had there been a proper evaluation of those risks and of the needs of those concerned?

54. **A representative of Armenia** said that, as well as the more than 1,000 persons reported missing in the context of the conflict that had been ongoing since the 1990s, there were also cases of enforced disappearance. The Government had shown its readiness to cooperate with the Government of Azerbaijan and had transmitted information collected in cooperation with the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. Both countries had set up commissions to address the matter. Armenia had issued a standing invitation to Azerbaijan to meet for discussions but the invitation had thus far been rejected. He was nevertheless optimistic that a joint meeting of the two commissions would be held.

55. **A representative of Armenia** said that the right to preserve and develop a cultural or religious identity was enshrined in the Constitution and applied equally to all national minorities. Despite its small size, Armenia had around 25,000 cultural monuments, a great many of which belonged to ethnic minorities. The State was obliged to care for those monuments. In determining the appropriate action to take, priorities were set based on the degree of vulnerability of the monuments, not on whether or not they were Armenian. The State budget allocation for the repair of monuments had been increased. While it fell short of the level requested, it had nevertheless made it possible to restore 20 monuments in 2023, and another 15 restorations were planned.

56. With the help of the communities and States concerned, restoration and repair had been carried out or were ongoing at a variety of sites, including monuments of Persian, Turkmen, Russian, Jewish and Greek origin. In addition, the State endorsed public-private partnerships to help religious groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, the Orthodox churches and the Yazidi community, to acquire or build their own places of worship.

57. **A representative of Armenia** said that, as could be seen from the examples given, the Government of Armenia attached importance not only to Christian but also to Islamic sites, both religions forming part of the region's cultural heritage.

58. **A representative of Armenia** said that, with regard to the role of NGOs in addressing the needs of refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, a refugee coordination forum had been established in 2023. Led by the Deputy Prime Minister and supported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), its task was to coordinate cooperation with major humanitarian and development partners, including NGOs, in providing services to the forcibly displaced population from Nagorno-Karabakh. Special working groups on protection, cash payments, economic resilience and other topics met weekly with the relevant ministries in order to harmonize efforts at the national level and ensure that all needs were met.

59. NGOs were an integral part of the joint coordination platform, which was now being restructured as part of the transition from emergency response to long-term support. In collaboration with the United Nations country team in Armenia, a framework was being created, and should be operational by February 2025, to address the livelihood and employment needs of refugees in coming years.

60. **A representative of Armenia** said that, although Armenia had signed the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families in 2013, the Migration and Citizenship Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs did not consider it expedient to ratify the Convention since a number of its provisions were inconsistent with the general thrust of the migration policy of Armenia. The matter was therefore still under discussion.

61. Anyone whose asylum application was rejected had the right to appeal to the courts. The procedure was free of charge. An explanation of the grounds for appeal, along with pertinent statistics, would be forwarded to the Committee in written form.

62. Asylum-seekers and recognized refugees were offered language and orientation courses, which were run by NGOs and international organizations working in that area.

63. **A representative of Armenia** said that the draft law on missing persons had been circulated. Among other things, the bill defined the concept of missing persons, set out their legal status and established their rights and those of their families. It was being developed under the new 2023–2025 action plan for the protection of human rights.

64. Under the newly adopted Criminal Code, which had entered into force in 2022, refugees crossing the Armenian border illegally were not held criminally liable if they faced a risk to their lives in their country of origin. The same applied to victims of trafficking in persons.

65. With regard to ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the Ministry of Justice was currently working on a draft law on cooperation between Armenia and the Court.

66. Lastly, work was under way to reform reparations procedures. Certain aspects of that matter were also being regulated in the draft law on ensuring equality and protection against discrimination. He hoped that the Government would be able to report progress in its next submissions to the Committee.

67. **A representative of Armenia** said that anyone who was not a citizen of Armenia or of any other country could apply for the status of stateless person. Successful applicants were issued with a stateless person's certificate of residence by the Migration and Citizenship Service. The number of stateless persons in Armenia had increased in recent years. As part of efforts to reduce that number and reduce statelessness in general, the law had been amended to establish the necessary legal mechanisms to guarantee the rights of stateless persons.

68. The law on citizenship had been amended in order to prevent Armenian citizens from becoming non-citizens, for example on issuance of a presidential decree terminating citizenship. The decree would now enter into force only after evidence had been provided that citizenship of another country had been obtained.

69. **Ms. Shepherd** said that she wished to commend the State party on its efforts to preserve its cultural monuments in the face of the many challenges involved.

70. **Mr. Amir** said that he had expected the delegation to pay tribute to its cultural standard-bearer Charles Aznavour, who had done so much to support and finance the cultural renaissance in Armenia. He would like to know whether a memorial had been erected in his honour.

71. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he wished to thank the delegation for the frank and useful dialogue.

72. **A representative of Armenia** said that his delegation appreciated the interactive discussion it had held with the Committee. He wished to reassure the Committee that the approach being taken to implementation of the Convention was not merely a

whole-of-government approach but a whole-of-society approach. He encouraged the Committee to apply rigorous academic standards to the alternative reports it had received and to check the allegations they made. Some of the points raised in those reports were already being weaponized on various social media platforms.

73. **The Chair** said that he wished to thank the delegation for the frankness of the dialogue, which had shown that the Convention was a living instrument.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*