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Summary record of the 4197th meeting

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Chair: Mr. Soh

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* Reissued for technical reasons on 26 March 2025.

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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
(continued)

Third periodic report of Albania (CCPR/C/ALB/3; CCPR/C/ALB/QPR/3)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Albania joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Albania**, introducing her country's third periodic report (CCPR/C/ALB/3), said that Albania had recently ratified the first Optional Protocol to the Covenant, demonstrating its commitment to ensuring that all individuals could fully exercise their rights and fundamental freedoms, without discrimination. During the period under review, a law on electronic communications had been enacted, with a view to creating an inclusive digital environment accessible to persons with disabilities. A law on the audiovisual media had been amended and a new broadcasting code had been approved to better protect children and victims of crime, guarantee gender equality and non-discrimination and address sexism in the media, among other aspects. Other legislative developments included the adoption of amendments to the Electoral Code, enabling Albanians living abroad to vote; the introduction of laws on the protection of personal data and on electronic governance to uphold freedom of expression and the right to information and safeguard individual security; and the enactment of a number of bylaws, thereby consolidating the legal framework for the protection of national minorities.
3. The General Prosecutor had issued several general instructions aimed at expanding the effective investigation and prosecution of offences, including domestic violence and violence against women and minors, and ensuring the protection of victims, the safety of journalists and electoral integrity. Independent judicial and national human rights institutions, including the People's Advocate, or Ombudsman, and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination had received budgetary increases since 2021. An online platform had been established to track the implementation of recommendations made by those and other independent institutions in Albania.
4. As part of efforts to combat corruption, new anti-corruption institutions had been made fully operational and their budgets and workforces had been increased. Between 2020 and 2023, 43 high-level officials had been investigated for corruption and 32 cases had been transferred to the courts. A cross-sectoral justice strategy for the period 2024–2030 contained comprehensive measures for preventing and combating corruption, particularly among members of the judiciary.
5. When it came to tackling discrimination, the National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians for the period 2021–2025 provided for the integration of Roma and Egyptians in fields such as employment, housing, education and health. Access to legal aid and civil registration procedures for those minorities had been improved, and specific measures had been taken to prevent statelessness and ensure access to birth registration. As a result of awareness-raising campaigns, the number of complaints received and processed by the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination had risen. It should be noted that the case of *Faslliu et al. v. Albania*, which had been submitted to the Committee in 2018 (CCPR/C/142/D/3602/2019), had been resolved in 2019.
6. As part of efforts to combat violence against women, her Government had ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190); enacted a law creating a national register of sex offenders and set up the attendant register; established a femicide observatory, the first of its kind in the region; and incorporated gender-responsive budgeting at the central and local levels. The National Strategy for Gender Equality for the period 2021–2030 included a strategic goal on reducing harmful practices, gender-based violence and domestic violence, while a cross-sectoral strategy on the protection of crime victims provided for equal access to justice and specialized support services. According to official data, there had been no marriages involving anyone under the age of 18 since 2022. A number of initiatives had been implemented to raise awareness of sexual and reproductive health and rights among young people.

7. Regarding the right to liberty and security, a general instruction had been issued to ensure that security measures were requested in accordance with the principles of legality, proportionality, the presumption of innocence and non-discrimination. Data from 2023 showed that there had been no reported cases of torture. Regarding the juvenile justice system, a cross-sectoral strategy on justice for children for the period 2022–2026 had been adopted and efforts had been made to create a child-friendly justice system. The arrest of minors in conflict with the law was a measure of last resort. In 2024, diversion measures had been applied in around two thirds of cases involving minors, up from half of cases in 2020, and child-friendly interviewing units had been established. Letters of rights, including for minors in conflict with the law, detained or arrested persons, and victims of domestic violence, had been distributed in 10 languages. The Security Academy had revised its curricula and training courses, including on the topic of juvenile justice, and training sessions had been organized focusing on human rights, non-discrimination, security measures and victim protection.

8. Prison overcrowding had effectively been eliminated through the opening of a new prison, the use of amnesty laws and improvements in the distribution of prisoners across institutions. A road map on the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners had recently been approved. All forms of slavery and trafficking in persons were criminalized in Albania. A cross-sectoral strategy on the protection of crime victims provided for a high degree of protection for victims of any form of trafficking, with particular reference to vulnerable groups.

9. Under asylum law, a single permit was issued through a single application procedure, thereby reducing the financial burden for foreigners and enhancing services available to them. There were several reception centres for asylum-seekers and irregular migrants in Albania. Ongoing support and training were provided to staff at those centres, in cooperation with the European Union Agency for Asylum and United Nations entities, with a view to enhancing the management and assessment of requests for international protection.

10. Ensuring access to justice and fair trial rights were among the Government's top priorities. The cross-sectoral justice strategy contained measures to strengthen the independence, efficiency and accessibility of the judicial system. Measures had been taken to enhance the free legal aid system, including by increasing the number of providers nationwide and improving the quality of services. Special attention was paid to ensuring equal access to justice, in particular for persons from vulnerable groups.

11. Regarding freedom of expression, significant changes had been made to ensure that information on the ownership of audiovisual media providers was disclosed, with a view to strengthening transparency in the media and ensuring alignment with international commitments and with the standards and directives of the European Union. The Audiovisual Media Authority had been put in charge of addressing issues relating to media ownership, media concentration and transparency. Members of the police and of the Security Academy had participated in training on freedom of expression and the safety of journalists.

12. Various measures had been taken with regard to the rights of the child. For instance, the Government had adopted an action plan to implement the European Child Guarantee and the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. At the local level, awareness-raising and information sessions had been held to address child labour, street begging and trafficking; similarly, workshops and training had been held for professionals and parents on the protection of children in cyberspace. A national foster care registry had been created, and a national assessment had been launched with a view to developing individualized transition plans for children with disabilities in residential care.

13. Lastly, the participation of women in political life had improved significantly. Women accounted for 35 per cent of parliamentarians and held more than half of ministerial posts. In local government, almost 50 per cent of councillors were women, and the numbers of women in the police had also increased.

14. **Ms. Donders** said that she wished to know what measures the State Party had taken to ensure that the reduction in the number of courts in Albania, as part of ongoing judicial reform, did not make it more difficult or expensive to obtain access to justice. She would like to know the current status of the bill on sexual and reproductive health under which the time

frame permitted for abortion would be extended from 12 to 14 weeks; it would also be useful to learn whether the bill contained an explicit prohibition on sex-selective abortions, a practice that reportedly still occurred in the State Party. The Committee was seriously concerned about a 2023 protocol between the Governments of Albania and Italy on migration matters, by which migrant reception and detention facilities would be established in Albania. She wondered how the State Party intended to ensure that it acted in full compliance with its international human rights obligations under that protocol.

15. She would welcome details on the framework in place to implement the recommendations of the Committee and would like to know whether the Committee's concluding observations were translated into Albanian and disseminated widely. In a similar vein, it would be helpful to know more about the procedures and mechanisms for follow-up on the Views of the Committee. More information on how the case of *Faslliu et al. v. Albania*, which concerned the topic of birth registration, had been resolved would be appreciated.

16. She would like to know what specific measures had been taken to raise awareness of the Covenant among judicial officials; whether the international human rights law system formed part of the curriculum of law schools; how often the Covenant had been directly invoked in the courts; and whether civic education, awareness-raising and other measures had been carried out to inform the general public about international human rights standards.

17. She would be curious to know more about the current situation of the People's Advocate and other national human rights institutions. The Committee had been informed that the election of the People's Advocate and of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination had been postponed for some years, leaving the incumbents in post, despite their terms having ended. The delegation might indicate what the Government was doing to fill those positions as quickly as possible and ensure their independent status; how it was securing adequate resources, including for the regional offices of those bodies, to ensure that they could fulfil their mandates effectively; and what measures it was taking to ensure the consistent and timely implementation of and follow-up to the recommendations of those bodies. It would be useful to know when the Government intended to relaunch the process, postponed in 2020, for reaccreditation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions of category A status for the People's Advocate.

18. **Mr. Carazo** said that, regarding anti-corruption measures, he wished to know what the impact had been of the creation, in 2019, of special structures, including courts, prosecutors and special investigation units, for the prosecution of corruption cases, as referenced in the State Party's report (CCPR/C/ALB/3, para. 11); and what challenges remained in terms of ensuring the effectiveness and independence of those structures. For example, he would be interested to know how the lack of applications to vacancies for magistrates in those courts had been addressed.

19. He would be grateful for information, including a copy of the State Party's second compliance report, due in 2024, on the results of the review by the Group of States against Corruption of the State Party's implementation of its recommendations. He would like to know what specific measures had been taken to ensure that the process of selecting judges was free from political influence and what progress had been made to prosecute and convict high-ranking public officials for corruption-related offences between 2022 and 2024. Statistical data and information on relevant cases involving senior political figures, judges and prosecutors would be welcome.

20. The Committee was concerned about the discrimination that the Roma and Egyptian population, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community and persons with disabilities continued to face in the State party. He would like to know what measures were being taken to ensure that the legal framework provided full and effective protection against direct, indirect and intersectional discrimination in all spheres; what action had been taken to increase awareness of the rights of LGBTI+ persons and of the social stigmatization faced by the Roma and Egyptian communities; and how the Government planned to address the challenges it faced in translating its anti-discrimination legislation and action plans into effective change on the ground. He would welcome statistical data on complaints of discrimination that had been lodged with the Office of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination or brought before the courts during the reporting period.

21. It would be useful to learn what the State Party was doing to address the socioeconomic disadvantages that certain groups, including the Roma population and persons with disabilities, continued to face. He would like to know whether sufficient resources were considered to have been allocated to the previous national strategies for the Roma population and the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 and would appreciate a detailed account of the outcome of those initiatives, including with regard to the coordination of all Roma-related programmes. He would welcome details of the official response to the negative comments made repeatedly by public officials about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

22. **Mr. Yigezu** said that he would be grateful for information on the concrete measures taken or planned by the State Party to expedite the investigations into the killing of four civilians and the wounding of several others during the January 2011 demonstrations that had taken place outside the Prime Minister's office, in the light of allegations that commanding officers of the National Guard had issued orders for the use of live ammunition against the demonstrators. He would like to know what was being done to identify and prosecute the perpetrators and to provide redress to the victims and their families.

23. He would like to know how the authorities planned to expand the legislative framework to enforce the rights of victims of enforced disappearances that had occurred during the period of dictatorship in the State Party, including with respect to uncovering the truth; the location, identification and return of remains; access to justice and comprehensive reparations; and the granting of victim status to the family members of persons who had been subjected to enforced disappearance, without requiring them to provide evidence of political persecution.

24. He would be interested to learn about any plans to amend the legislation on police use of firearms to bring it into line with international standards and would be grateful for an update on the progress that had been made in the investigation into allegations of excessive use of force by law enforcement officers during the nationwide protests that had taken place in December 2020. The delegation might provide details of the investigation, prosecution and punishment of any cases of excessive use of force during the reporting period.

25. **Ms. Tigroudja** said that she would like to know what steps the State Party planned to take to identify the barriers to women's participation in public life and achieve gender parity at all levels of government. It would be interesting to learn what measures the authorities planned to take to combat the stereotypes that underpinned the practice of selective abortion of female fetuses and to discourage the practice, in particular by raising awareness among medical professionals.

26. She wished to know what progress had been made in improving women's ownership of property and businesses, including with respect to the recommendations of the People's Advocate concerning the joint ownership by men and women of structures rebuilt after the 2019 earthquake and rural women's effective access to land.

27. She would appreciate clarification as to whether a comprehensive policy and action plan were in place to combat all forms of violence against women, including domestic, political, economic and obstetric violence. It would be useful to learn what measures the State Party was taking to ensure effective access to justice for survivors of violence against women. She would welcome an update on any progress that had been made to ensure that emergency shelters for victims of domestic violence were available throughout the State Party.

28. She would like to know whether the State Party was planning to amend the definition of rape, as set out in the Criminal Code, to make lack of consent the central element. It was unclear whether the mediation process between rapist and victim remained mandatory; if it did, she would like to know whether there were plans to remove the requirement. She wished to know what measures the Government was taking to improve access to family planning and sexual and reproductive health services in rural areas.

29. **Ms. Bassim** said that she would welcome an update on the measures being taken to eradicate blood feud-related crimes and on efforts to investigate such crimes and prosecute and punish the perpetrators. She would appreciate information on any measures of reparation or redress that were available to victims and on efforts to provide victims, particularly women

and children, with economic, social and educational services. She would welcome detailed information on any procedures that were applied to protect potential victims of blood feud-related crimes.

The meeting was suspended at 4.05 p.m. and resumed at 4.35 p.m.

30. **A representative of Albania** said that the comprehensive legal reforms that had been enacted in 2023 had been intended to enhance the quality and integrity of the justice system and render it more efficient. Although the number of courts had been reduced, legal aid had been expanded. In 2024, primary legal aid, which was offered by 14 civil society organizations in 20 locations, had been provided to 6,220 individuals, while secondary legal aid had been provided to 904 individuals. A total of 1,273 victims of domestic violence or gender-based violence, who automatically qualified for legal aid, had received it, alongside almost 300 members of sexual minorities and 374 persons from the Roma and Egyptian communities.

31. The Covenant formed part of the initial mandatory training programme for judges and prosecutors and had been covered in 20 in-service training courses in 2024. A strategy was in place for the protection of victims, and a mechanism was being set up for the provision of redress. In the case concerning the death of a demonstrator who had been shot while participating in protests outside the Prime Minister's Office, the Administrative Court had awarded more than €100,000 in compensation to each of the four victims.

32. Legal amendments had been enacted in 2020 to ensure that all land and property belonging to married couples was jointly owned. Work was ongoing to bring all legislation, including the Criminal Code, into line with the relevant United Nations standards. Consultations on that work were expected to begin in May 2025. There were also plans to review the legislation on femicide and to place the absence of consent at the core of the definition of rape.

33. **A representative of Albania** said that the protocol for strengthening cooperation in migration matters that had been agreed between Albania and Italy demonstrated the Albanian Government's commitment to controlling irregular migration in the region and encouraging the use of regular forms of migration and reaffirmed its position as a strong ally of the European Union, in line with its aspiration to greater European integration. Under the protocol, Albania would make available to the Italian authorities two designated facilities: one for identification procedures and one for accommodation. The facilities, whose combined capacity would be limited to a maximum of 3,000 migrants, would be under the jurisdiction of the Italian authorities, which would be responsible for transportation arrangements and would ensure that international healthcare and hygiene standards were met. Any necessary hospital treatment would be provided in local hospitals and paid for by Italy. The maximum duration of migrants' stay in the facilities would be determined according to Italian law.

34. **A representative of Albania** said that the parliament had followed the legal procedures for the election of the People's Advocate and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, and had drawn up and discussed lists of candidates. The mandate of the People's Advocate was well defined in law, and the incumbent would remain in office until her successor was elected. The new People's Advocate would likely be elected from a new list of candidates to be drawn up after the upcoming parliamentary election.

35. In 2017, the parliament had adopted a resolution to establish a mechanism to monitor the implementation of recommendations issued by independent institutions, including the People's Advocate. Accordingly, a new inter-institutional platform to strengthen the tracking of recommendations was being developed and was due to be launched in 2025. The new platform would improve access and usability and expand the participation of stakeholders.

36. Since 2020, the number of complaints submitted by individuals to the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination had increased, while the number submitted by organizations had fallen. In 2023, the Office of the Commissioner had participated in 53 court proceedings, with the courts upholding the Commissioner's decision in half of cases.

37. The parliament had approved an increased four-year budget for the People's Advocate, allowing it to recruit an additional 10 employees. The budget of the Office of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination had risen by 45 per cent.

38. **A representative of Albania** said that the parliament had various mechanisms for the monitoring and follow-up of treaty body recommendations and their inclusion on the parliamentary agenda. The inter-institutional platform currently being developed would take account of the issues raised and requests made by human rights and other civil society organizations during legislative processes.

39. **A representative of Albania** said that the Government applied a thorough and holistic approach to preventing all forms of corruption. In particular, it had worked closely with the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) of the Council of Europe. In March 2025, GRECO was due hold a plenary meeting at which it would discuss the 19 recommendations that, according to its 2022 compliance report, had not been fully implemented by Albania. It was expected that GRECO would recognize positive progress in respect of all of those recommendations. Other steps taken to combat corruption included the appointment in January 2024 of a Minister of State for Public Administration and Anti-Corruption; the development of integrity plans by all ministries; and the adoption of procedures for the appointment of members of the National Bureau of Investigation and the Special Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime Structure, as a result of which all prosecutor and investigator posts had been filled.

40. Furthermore, following a major reform of the justice system, judges had been required to undergo vetting to ensure that they met the criteria of integrity and proficiency – a process that had concluded in November 2024. Judges were appointed by two fully independent bodies – the High Judicial Council and High Prosecutorial Council. Albania also had a *sui generis* institution, the Office of the High Inspector of Justice, which ensured accountability across the justice system.

41. **A representative of Albania** said that, in 2024, the parliament had established an ad hoc committee on deepening reforms for good governance, rule of law and anti-corruption, which would draft a national action plan to address relevant challenges and recommend measures for legal and institutional reforms. In 2024, Albania had significantly improved its score in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index and had risen in the ranking to eightieth out of 180 countries.

42. **A representative of Albania** said that the bill on sexual and reproductive health had been published on the national public consultation platform and had generated a mixture of positive and critical reactions. All comments received through the platform would be reviewed and incorporated as necessary; the process would then move to parliamentary adoption.

43. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection had drafted a bill on gender equality, also undergoing public consultation, that would strengthen women's protection against discrimination and violence. The bill, which was aligned with European and international standards, provided for the recognition of hate speech and hate crimes as forms of discrimination, proposed stronger legal safeguards against cyberharassment and digital violence, and envisaged a new enforcement mechanism to regulate hate speech in the media and online.

44. Key measures to combat discrimination against persons with disabilities included improvements to the accessibility of public spaces, transport and digital services and the expansion of social and health services. The disability assessment system followed a biopsychosocial model, ensuring fair evaluation and referrals to education, employment and vocational training. Employment policies required companies to adapt workplaces and, if they failed to employ persons with disabilities, to pay into the Employment Social Fund, which supported community-based and mobile services, financial aid for assistive devices and the deinstitutionalization of disability care.

45. Under the National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians in Albania 2021–2025, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection had coordinated the training of over 200 focal points in central and local government. Access to legal aid had improved, while awareness campaigns on Roma integration continued to highlight key issues. Targeted health measures included the deployment of mobile medical units to provide screening, vaccination, maternal care, education and annual check-ups for

members of Roma and Egyptian communities. Family-friendly policies included the provision of childcare and free school textbooks.

46. Under the National Action Plan for LGBTI+ Persons, the Government aimed to enhance the access of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons to public services and specialized support and to foster a more inclusive society. Contact persons for issues relating to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community had been appointed in all institutions and departments. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection had organized technical meetings and awareness activities and was drafting a protocol on the prevention of dangerous behaviours among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and a medical transgender protocol, with the participation of relevant institutions and partner organizations.

47. **A representative of Albania** said that there had been no recorded cases of torture committed by officers in the performance of their duties. The State Police was prohibited from carrying firearms when policing demonstrations. It was not aware of any deaths having occurred during the protests of 2024; in fact, no protesters had been killed in Albania since 2011.

48. Blood feud-related crimes were increasingly rare – only a handful of cases were reported each year. Under article 78 of the Criminal Code, murder due to blood feud carried a severe penalty of no fewer than 30 years’ imprisonment. The State Police cooperated with other public institutions to prevent blood feud-related crimes and would take the necessary steps should an offence be committed.

49. **A representative of Albania** said that, during the previous five years, no children had been placed under the protection of the State Agency for the Protection of Children’s Rights as a result of a blood feud. It appeared that the problem had been largely eradicated.

50. **A representative of Albania** said that the Authority on Access to Information on the Former State Security Service was taking various steps on behalf of the families of victims of the communist dictatorship. For example, the Authority had taken the initiative to draft an administrative act on the exhumation of remains, and, further to 1,400 requests from victims’ families, was preparing to conduct surveys of potential grave sites using non-invasive methods. Two investigations had been opened into crimes committed during the communist regime – one case concerning aggravated murder and one concerning crimes against humanity.

51. **A representative of Albania** said that Albania had come a long way in strengthening its legislative framework to promote and enforce gender equality. The country also continued to make strides in women’s representation in leadership roles; for instance, it currently had a gender-balanced Council of Ministers. Combating violence against women and girls remained a high priority. In the previous five years, referral mechanisms had been established for the effective handling of domestic and gender-based violence cases. Comprehensive measures had been adopted in the area of gender-responsive social protection, including in respect of paid maternity leave, childcare leave for both parents and economic support for vulnerable women. The Government had introduced “baby bonus” payments, expanded social care services for women and girls aged 14 to 39 and tripled economic support for domestic violence survivors. Women’s participation in higher education had increased, with women now accounting for 58.7 per cent of university students.

52. Despite those achievements, challenges remained in the labour sphere, notably in the agriculture sector. The Government continued to promote decent work for women; to ensure their equal access to economic resources, land ownership and financial services; and to narrow the gender pay gap and the gender digital divide. Special measures were applied in order to provide opportunities for the most vulnerable groups, such as Roma and Egyptian women, women with disabilities and rural women.

53. **A representative of Albania** said that the Supreme Court had handed down five judgments that referred directly to the Covenant. Statistics on lower court judgments that mentioned the Covenant were unavailable.

54. **A representative of Albania** said that the adoption of gender quotas had led to a marked increase in women’s representation in political life and decision-making. Following

the parliamentary election of April 2021, women had taken up 50 out of 140 seats in the parliament (35.7 per cent), a small increase on the previous legislature. Women had accounted for 39 per cent of candidates during the 2021 election. Five of the eight standing parliamentary committees were chaired by women.

55. **A representative of Albania** said that the law currently set a 30 per cent quota for women on lists of candidates in parliamentary elections. The general recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had been distributed to national institutions and all ministries were preparing action plans for its implementation.

56. **A representative of Albania** said that the fifth periodic report submitted by Albania under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/ALB/5) outlined the progress that had been made and the challenges that persisted in ensuring full gender equality.

57. **A representative of Albania** said that the Special Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime Structure had a good track record and the necessary capacity to continue its work. Data on investigations conducted by the Special Structure in 2024 were not yet available. In 2023, 708 investigations had been opened and 53 cases, generally involving organized crime groups, had come before the courts for adjudication. Work was also being done in the area of asset recovery, in particular to ensure that recovered assets were used to benefit local communities.

58. The Special Structure continued to prosecute high-level political figures suspected of corruption. In parallel, administrative bodies were doing important anti-corruption work, including vetting and referrals. There had been 19 referrals in cases where former judges and prosecutors were suspected of concealing proceeds of corruption. Other referrals concerned property registration and public procurement. Efforts were being made to bring Albanian legislation on conflicts of interest and whistle-blower protection into line with European standards.

59. **A representative of Albania** said that the regional offices of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination were not under the jurisdiction of the parliament, but rather functioned under the exclusive competence of the Commissioner. The regional offices had sufficient human resources, and seven temporary employees had recently been offered permanent contracts. There was a voluntary alliance of women deputies in the parliament representing all political groups. The alliance had the highest number of women deputies in any legislature since 1990, and it focused on promoting the recognition and respect of women's political rights.

60. **A representative of Albania** said that significant steps had been taken to revise national legislation and policies to implement the Istanbul Convention. Coordinated referral mechanisms had been established at the local and national level, in addition to shelters and crisis centres, and specialized prosecutors had been trained in handling cases involving survivors of domestic violence. The National Gender Equality Council oversaw the drafting and implementation of gender-related policies.

61. The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence had conducted a visit to Albania in October 2023 to assess its compliance with the Istanbul Convention, with a particular focus on access to justice, protection mechanisms and prevention measures. Albania participated in regional and international initiatives aimed at addressing violence against women, including through partnerships with the Council of Europe, United Nations agencies and civil society organizations. The Istanbul Convention and the recommendations issued by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had been incorporated into the draft law on gender equality, which was currently in the consultation phase.

62. **A representative of Albania** said that, between 2022 and 2024, the State Police had recorded an increase in domestic violence cases and the number of perpetrators arrested, but a decrease in victims. The Police was working to encourage victims to report all cases of domestic violence. Several training sessions on domestic violence and illegal trafficking had been conducted for 216 police officers, and guidelines on handling cases of violence had

been disseminated. The State Police had held meetings with the community, schools, representatives of public institutions and non-governmental organizations to raise awareness about domestic and gender-based violence.

63. **A representative of Albania** said that the amendments to Act No. 69/2018 had made it possible to resolve the case of *Fasliu et al. v. Albania* and 144 others. There were currently no stateless persons in Albania, only citizens at risk of statelessness. The amendments to the law had removed obstacles to birth registration for persons born abroad.

64. Special procedures had been established to manage cases of unregistered births or missing names on foreign birth certificates. Where names were missing, a name would be assigned during the registration process. Although some citizens might still face delays in document completion due to economic reasons, statelessness was no longer a major issue in Albania.

65. **Mr. Carazo** said that, in the light of reports that revealed patterns of abuse, excessive use of force and arbitrary actions by the State Police and prison staff, he would be grateful if the State Party could provide detailed and up-to-date statistics on investigations, prosecutions and convictions related to torture or ill-treatment during the reporting period, including information on the outcomes of cases and the disciplinary sanctions imposed.

66. He would appreciate further information on the practical functioning of the People's Advocate as the national mechanism for the prevention of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including the number of visits made to places of detention over the previous two years, the key findings from those inspections and the follow-up actions taken to address any shortcomings. He also wished to know what measures had been implemented to ensure that persons deprived of their liberty had timely and immediate access to a lawyer, medical examinations and the right to notify a family member or a third party of their detention. How did the State Party monitor compliance with those guarantees to prevent ill-treatment, particularly in the early stages of detention?

67. **Ms. Donders** said that she would welcome further details on the types of free legal aid provided by the State Party. She would also be curious to learn how the independence and impartiality of the People's Advocate and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination was ensured despite the heated political debates surrounding the appointment of candidates.

68. **Ms. Tigroudja** said that she would like to know what measures had been implemented to rehabilitate and educate perpetrators of domestic violence, how the State Party ensured that the prohibition on selective abortions was applied in practice and what steps were being taken to increase the representation of women at the municipal level.

69. **Mr. Yigezu** said that he would like to receive information on the investigations related to the protester who had died during the December 2020 protest, Klodian Rasha, and the other injured protesters. Furthermore, he wondered what the criteria were for the use of lethal force by police officers and whether there was an oversight mechanism to monitor the use of such force.

70. **Mr. Helfer** said that he would like to know what steps were being taken to implement the National Action Plan for LGBTI+ Persons 2021–2027, in particular to provide legal protection to same-sex partners.

71. **A representative of Albania** said that no criminal charges had been brought in relation to torture in 2023. The prevention and monitoring of ill-treatment in prisons was managed by the General Directorate of Prisons, in addition to the internal inspection mechanism. Allegations of ill-treatment by prison staff were verified by the Office of the People's Advocate in its role as the national mechanism for the prevention of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

72. The Office of the People's Advocate continued to fulfil its functions in compliance with the Paris Principles. It was empowered to conduct regular inspections of places of detention without prior authorization and initiate legal proceedings in the Constitutional Court if laws conflicted with the Constitution or international treaties.

73. The number of recommendations from the People's Advocate and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination that had been fully or partially implemented in the prison system had increased between 2022 and 2024. Other entities involved in monitoring human rights and preventing torture in prisons included the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights, civil society organizations such as the Albanian Helsinki Committee, and the prosecution service.

74. There were internal measures applied to the prison system to enforce the prohibition of torture, including regular inspections, the installation of complaints boxes and dedicated phone lines to enable prisoners to contact the People's Advocate or the General Directorate of Prisons. Alleged cases of ill-treatment were referred to the prosecution service for further investigation.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.