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Summary record of the 4237th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 2 July 2025, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Soh

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 40 of the Covenant
(*continued*)

Fourth periodic report of Latvia (continued)

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

Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 40 of the Covenant
(continued)

Fourth periodic report of Latvia (continued) (CCPR/C/LVA/4; CCPR/C/LVA/Q/4; CCPR/C/LVA/RQ/4)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Latvia joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Latvia**, responding to questions raised at the previous meeting, said that section 174 of the Criminal Law now provided that persons who committed acts of cruelty or violence against a spouse or former spouse, a person with whom they had been in a continuous intimate relationship or shared a household or a person to whom they were related in the first or second degree of kinship could be sentenced to up to 3 years' imprisonment, among other penalties. There was no need for victims to make a complaint in order for proceedings to be initiated under that section. The penalties applied to the offences of threatening to commit murder or inflict serious bodily harm and stalking now included up to 1 year's imprisonment, or up to 3 years' imprisonment if those offences were committed against a person in one of the aforementioned categories. Marital rape was prohibited by section 159 of the Law, on rape, and, as an act of sexual violence against a spouse, was punished in accordance with the provisions on aggravating circumstances.
3. Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Law provided that cases of domestic violence were to be reviewed by courts in a timely manner and were to be treated as a priority. More than 13 training sessions on various topics related to domestic violence had been conducted for judges, prosecutors and other people who worked in that area.
4. **A representative of Latvia** said that, on average, between 70 and 80 homicides were committed each year, approximately 20 of which were classified as feminicides committed in the home by a partner. Analysis had revealed that most of those feminicides were the result of a preventable escalation of domestic abuse. As from 1 July 2025, electronic monitoring of offenders had been introduced with a view to preventing such cases and other homicides. To build trust with potential victims of gender-based violence, the police was increasing its efforts to encourage them to report such violence and changing its practices to prevent secondary victimization.
5. **A representative of Latvia** said that a number of steps had been taken to combat violence against women and domestic violence as a national policy priority, including an initiative to establish support centres for victims of sexual violence in cooperation with the Ministry of Health. Bringing about change in social attitudes towards violence against women and domestic violence was a time-consuming task that required sustained public education efforts. Building effective coordination between government institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other relevant stakeholders also took time. Publishing the stories of survivors of domestic violence had helped to humanize the issue and inspire others to come forward. As a result, there had been an increase in reporting of acts of violence and more people had sought psychological, legal and social support services, while the number of people receiving institutional rehabilitation had fallen. Victims were increasingly choosing more flexible and accessible forms of support, such as the new safe house service.
6. **A representative of Latvia** said that, to prevent torture and ill-treatment at detention facilities, the Internal Security Bureau carried out various preventive activities each year to enhance officials' awareness of the types of conduct that were inadmissible and promote reporting of potential offences. For example, on 28 December 2022, the Bureau had carried out preventive visits to Daugavgrīva Prison and Jēkabpils Prison. Since 2016, the Bureau had organized annual conferences dedicated to the prevention of violent conduct, in cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsman and other partners. Each conference had been attended by approximately 400 participants, including officials from the Prison Administration. Following the 2024 conference, cooperation with that body had been stepped up, including through the development of content for use at the Prison Administration Training Centre.

7. Pursuant to their mandate, officials of the Internal Security Bureau communicated directly with detainees during visits and ensured that they were informed about the channels that they could use to submit complaints to the Bureau, which included a confidential hotline and submission via a third party. There had been 22 complaints of unlawful conduct by prison officials in 2020, 46 in 2022, 76 in 2024 and 84 thus far in 2025. The large number of complaints submitted thus far in 2025 was the result of an amendment to the mandate of the Bureau that enabled it to investigate all categories of crimes committed by Prison Administration officials.

8. **Mr. Ndiaye** said that he would be interested to know why the State Party did not systematically collect and publish data on the length and frequency of pretrial detention and what steps it would take to address that data gap. He would welcome data on the use and effectiveness of non-custodial alternatives to pretrial detention, such as bail or electronic monitoring. It would be useful to hear about the measures taken to ensure that all detained persons, including those with court-appointed lawyers, were fully informed of their rights and had access to a qualified lawyer from the outset of detention, and about the methods used to evaluate the adequacy of court-appointed legal representation. He wondered whether the State Party would implement mandatory audiovisual recording of all police interviews with detained persons, if it had not done so already.

9. It would be helpful to hear about the safeguards that were in place to prevent political interference in the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court. He would like to know how the State Party had addressed reports of politicization and corruption in the judicial system and sought to improve public trust in it. It would be useful to receive clarification as to whether the Academy of Justice was fully operational and what training programmes had been implemented for judges, prosecutors and investigators since it had opened. He wondered what steps had been taken to ensure that judgments were issued in a timely manner, in line with article 14 of the Covenant.

10. He would welcome information on the types and lengths of sentences handed down to minors during the reporting period. Could the delegation explain what measures were in place to ensure that minors were detained only as a last resort and for the shortest possible length of time?

11. **Mr. Šimonović** said that he wished to know why the national referral mechanism that the State Party had planned to establish under the Plan for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2021–2023 had not yet been set up. It would be helpful to hear how the State Party intended to ensure that it fully transposed Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims into domestic law by the established deadline. He wondered how the conflict in Ukraine had affected the prevalence of trafficking in persons in Latvia, including trafficking for sexual exploitation and child trafficking. It would be useful to learn whether the State Party had organized any additional targeted training for law enforcement and other officials in identifying and assisting victims of trafficking under the circumstances brought about by the conflict. He would welcome the delegation's comments as to how the State Party's transition from a country of origin to, prevalently, a country of transit and destination for victims of trafficking reflected the Government's prevention efforts, including its focus on training relevant officials. It would be helpful to hear details of the steps taken to promptly, effectively and impartially investigate, prosecute and punish all acts of trafficking in persons during the reporting period and to provide remedies to victims. Data on trends in the prosecution and punishment of trafficking offences over the previous four years would be appreciated.

12. It would be useful to hear about the progress that had been made thus far in the study on the safety situation of journalists and other media professionals in Latvia launched by the Ministry of Culture, including the key security challenges and risks that had been identified. He wondered how the resulting recommendations were being implemented. He wished to know how often criminal proceedings related to cases of serious assault were terminated because the authorities were unable to find the perpetrators, as they had been in the case involving journalist and publisher Leonīds Jākobsons. He would appreciate details of the findings of the investigation into that case. What steps would the State Party take to prevent such assaults and hold perpetrators to account?

13. He would be interested to know more about the legal grounds on which the broadcasting licence of TV Rain, an independent Russian channel operating in Latvia, had been revoked, and the anticipated impact of the new legal requirement that programmes with an audio track in a language that was not an official language of the European Union or the European Economic Area must also have a Latvian-language audio track. He would appreciate an explanation of the legal basis for the requirement introduced under the National Security Concept of 28 September 2023 that all public media content must be in Latvian or a language belonging to the European cultural space. Had any legal or administrative action been taken to implement that policy thus far?

14. **Mr. Helfer** said that he would be grateful if the delegation would confirm whether the enhanced border regime had now been extended until the end of 2025 and explain the justification for prolonging the restrictions applied under that regime. He wished to know how the large-scale pushbacks that the State Border Guard had reportedly conducted between August 2021 and January 2025 were compatible with the principle of non-refoulement. In the light of reports that, during that period, refugees at the border had been subjected to ill-treatment that had resulted in the deaths of more than 20 individuals, he wondered what training and monitoring measures had been taken to ensure that migrants were treated humanely by the State Border Guard. Could the delegation commit to releasing the report on the Internal Security Bureau investigation into those allegations of ill-treatment or explain the basis for its conclusions that no ill-treatment on the part of the Latvian authorities had taken place?

15. He wished to know how many border crossing points were currently in operation and what steps were being taken to facilitate applications from persons seeking international protection. He wondered what percentage of asylum-seekers were detained pending the outcome of their asylum application and for how long on average, and whether the State Party would consider adopting a policy of not detaining children for immigration reasons under any circumstances. Did asylum-seekers have access to legal assistance at all stages of the asylum process, including when filing appeals against detention orders?

16. He would like to know whether the State Party would consider amending the Citizenship Law to ensure that all stateless children born in its territory were automatically granted Latvian citizenship. He wondered what steps had been taken to guarantee that non-citizens had access to the information and resources they needed to complete the naturalization process. The delegation might wish to comment on the extent to which the restrictions, including language proficiency requirements, that prevented non-citizens from exercising certain professions were compatible with article 26 of the Covenant.

17. He was curious to know whether the State Party would consider reforming the Conscription Control Commission to ensure that it operated independently of the military. He would appreciate a description of the criteria applied by the Commission when reviewing applications from individuals who wished to perform alternative civilian service in place of military service. He wondered whether conscientious objectors were assigned roles within the alternative civilian service, rather than non-combat roles in the military, and whether the State Party would consider revising the National Defence Service Law to allow for the honourable discharge, without financial or other penalties, of conscientious objectors who wished to end their military service early. What steps would be taken to guarantee respect for the rights of conscientious objectors in the event of emergencies or armed conflict?

18. **Ms. Donders** said that she wished to know what had been done to ensure that the ban on the publication of election campaign materials in languages other than Latvian did not affect the participation of members of minority groups in elections. She wondered why non-citizen residents were generally unable to vote in elections and whether any steps were being taken to promote their political participation. It would be interesting to hear about what needed to be done to ensure that persons with disabilities could fully exercise their political rights and what action the State Party would take to ensure the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in efforts to that end. The delegation might wish to describe what measures had been taken to follow up on the recommendations made to the State Party by other human rights treaty bodies with a view to increasing the representation of women in political life.

19. She would appreciate information on the steps taken to ensure that schools, in particular those in areas where teachers were likely to lack proficiency in Latvian, had been prepared for the transition to using Latvian as the sole language of instruction. She wished to know whether members of minority groups had been invited to participate in consultations prior to the adoption of the law on that transition and, if so, what had been done to ensure that their concerns were taken into account. It would be helpful to know what measures were being taken to guarantee the rights of linguistic minorities, how many programmes offering children from such minorities the opportunity to learn about their history and culture in their native language had been set up since the transition, what budget had been earmarked for such programmes and what had been done to raise awareness of their existence.

The meeting was suspended at 10.50 a.m. and resumed at 11.15 a.m.

20. **A representative of Latvia** said that all police interviews of children were filmed in order to protect children's rights and minimize the possibility of retraumatization. Interviews of adults were documented in a written report, which constituted an official legal record of the discussion. Police officers responding to incidents were required to wear body cameras for accountability and record-keeping purposes.

21. **A representative of Latvia** said that all prisoners had the right to receive visits from their lawyer while detained. The Court Administration maintained a list of lawyers who were accredited to provide State-funded legal aid, most of whom had "sworn advocate" status. Responsibility for monitoring the quality of the work carried out by lawyers with that status lay with the Latvian Council of Sworn Advocates. In the event that a complaint regarding a lawyer who provided State-funded legal aid was found to have merit, the lawyer concerned would be removed from the list of the Court Administration.

22. The main safeguard against political interference in the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court – or any other court, for that matter – was the fact that candidates were nominated by the Council of the Judiciary. Although appointments to the Supreme Court were subject to the approval of the parliament, there had been only one case in which a nomination had been rejected, and the candidate in question had been renominated and appointed the following year. While there was no specific legal framework for addressing corruption within the justice system, a number of ethical codes, guidelines and training programmes had been developed to tackle the issue.

23. In 2024, the average time taken by the courts to deliver their initial judgment had been 2.6 months in civil cases and 7.2 months in criminal cases. Efforts were constantly being made to reduce that time, including by ensuring that complex cases were more evenly distributed among judges. The Academy of Justice had been operational since 1 January 2025 and had already organized more than 100 training events on various fields of law, including international law.

24. **A representative of Latvia** said that Latvia was both a country of origin and a country of destination for trafficking in persons. The majority of victims brought into the country had been trafficked for the purpose of labour exploitation, sexual exploitation or begging. Between 2020 and 2024, the number of criminal investigations opened into cases of trafficking in persons had ranged from two to eight per year. While cooperation on the issue of trafficking was already strong thanks to the creation of a specialized multidisciplinary group to tackle the problem, there were also plans to prepare legislation on the establishment of a national referral mechanism.

25. At the outset of the refugee crisis triggered by the conflict in Ukraine, the police and border authorities had established a special programme to identify Ukrainian refugees who might be victims of trafficking in persons. The law enforcement authorities were also working with partners at the European Union level to support unaccompanied minors from Ukraine, who were registered and provided with legal assistance. No cases involving the exploitation of such minors had been identified, and just one case involving the sexual exploitation of Ukrainian women had been recorded since the start of the crisis.

26. **A representative of Latvia** said that the investigation into the attack on Leonīds Jākobsons had been conducted in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Law, which provided for the termination of criminal proceedings in cases in which the authorities had

been unable to identify the perpetrator. The case could still be reopened in the event that new information emerged. The authorities took journalists' safety very seriously; in 2019, for example, an individual found guilty of threatening and harassing a well-known investigative journalist had been sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment and 1 year of probationary supervision.

27. **A representative of Latvia** said that steps taken to enhance the protection of journalists had included the establishment of a dedicated working group, comprising State institutions and NGOs, and the commission of a study to identify the main protection needs. The Government was working to implement the recommendations resulting from that study, including by incorporating a more precise definition of "the media" into the relevant laws. International experts would be invited to deliver seminars to help build journalists' capacity to protect themselves in potentially dangerous situations. Police officers would be provided with training in recognizing and dealing with journalists. The Association of Latvian Journalists held annual meetings with the police to discuss ways of enhancing their working relationship. Efforts were being made to collaborate with NGOs that offered key services such as psychological support for journalists who had been attacked. The Ministry of Culture was working with the Ministry of Justice to draw up draft legislation that would transpose Directive (EU) 2024/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings.

28. The broadcasting licence of TV Rain had been revoked pursuant to the Electronic Mass Media Law. The decision to revoke the licence had been made by the independent media regulator, which was empowered to make such decisions in cases in which it identified a threat to national security or public order. The existence of such a threat had been confirmed by the court handling the case, which had ruled that the station's dissemination of inaccurate statements and calls for support for the Russian army could endanger the security of Latvia and other European countries. That opinion was shared by the Office of the Ombudsman, which considered that any efforts by television stations to spread hate speech and Russian propaganda were contrary to the international obligations and national interests of Latvia. The Government would nonetheless continue to ensure that the representatives of such stations had access to justice and a fair trial and would strive to guarantee the independence of the media regulator, in line with the European Media Freedom Act.

29. The amendments to the Electronic Mass Media Law did not prohibit the use of certain languages; rather, they required international channels that broadcast in languages other than Latvian to add a Latvian-language audio track to their programmes. The measure actually increased the reach of channels that broadcast in Russian, since barely half of young Latvian people spoke Russian nowadays. Roughly half of commercial television programmes were available in Russian, while 35 per cent of radio programmes and 13 per cent of the press were in that language. Furthermore, the State subsidized the postal costs of all print media, including publications in Russian.

30. The delegation was not in a position to comment on the ongoing case before the Constitutional Court concerning the conflict between the National Security Concept of 28 September 2023 and the law obliging the public broadcaster to broadcast in minority languages. However, it should be noted that decisions about programming, including the choice of languages, were for the public broadcaster to make. In fact, it was currently considering how to better represent the diversity of minority groups in the country.

31. **A representative of Latvia** said that, while the state of emergency at the border with Belarus had been lifted, the enhanced border regime, which had been assessed as being proportional, lawful and in line with international obligations and relevant European court rulings, would be in force until 31 December 2025. Much effort had been made to avoid breaches of the principle of non-refoulement, including the design of training materials for border guards, which had recently been revised to take into account Schengen area rules. The training materials dealt with the actions to be taken in situations where a person had a serious, non-visible health condition or was seeking international protection, the criteria for determining that a person was from a dangerous country and the detection of cases of trafficking in persons. In 2024, more than 1,000 border guards had received training in fundamental rights and the identification of vulnerable persons and victims of trafficking in

persons. International bodies, including the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the European Union Agency for Asylum and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, had been involved in providing the training.

32. The authorities were required to provide food, water, clothing and other basic necessities to persons in need attempting to cross the border. The authorities were not aware of the 20 reported deaths at the border with Belarus; however, there had been two cases of migrant deaths at the border in 2024 and one case so far in 2025. There was one operational border crossing for persons between Belarus and Latvia, at Patarnieki, where 6 asylum applications had been filed in 2023, 62 applications in 2024 and 53 applications so far in 2025. The border crossing at Silene, which had seen few asylum applications, had been closed in September 2023; the closure was not deemed to hinder the exercise of the right to asylum.

33. As a rule, asylum-seekers were not detained and were accommodated in open centres run by the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. In some cases, however, it was necessary to detain an individual for the purpose of identification or when he or she presented a security threat or flight risk or was uncooperative; each case was assessed individually. Children under the age of 14 years were not detained, although they could be placed in accommodation centres with their family, at the request of their parents. In 2023, 585 male and 176 female asylum-seekers and 20 children aged 14 to 17 years had been detained, while 137 children had been placed in accommodation centres with their families. In 2024, 446 male and 76 female asylum-seekers and 16 children aged 14 to 17 years had been detained, while 40 children had been placed in accommodation centres with their families. So far in 2025, 80 children aged 14 to 17 years had been detained, the higher number being due to the fact that the age of some of the children had yet to be verified. Asylum-seekers were entitled to legal assistance, at their own expense, from the outset of detention and to legal assistance provided by the State should their case proceed to appeal.

34. **A representative of Latvia** said that more than half of the membership of the Conscription Control Commission was non-military and the Commission's decisions could be challenged before the courts. As Chair of the Commission, she could assure the Committee that the Ministry of Defence had never interfered with its work, so there were no plans to change its organization. Decisions on applications for alternative civilian service were made on the basis of an in-person interview with the applicant and in accordance with laws and rulings by national and international courts. Only three such applications had been received, of which one had been accepted on religious grounds, while the other two had been denied.

35. Professional military service contracts were concluded for a fixed period of time, were extendable with the soldier's consent and could be terminated at any time with the agreement of both parties. Personnel wishing to terminate their contract must give two months' notice, during which time the requisite assessments, including medical checks, were conducted and documents prepared. While soldiers were obliged to perform military service in accordance with the law, it was the responsibility of commanders to know their subordinates' abilities and health limitations. Conscription for active service in the event of mobilization would be carried out in accordance with the Military Service Law, which had been amended in 2024 to allow the enrolment in the reserves of persons unable to perform military service due to their views, conscience or religious beliefs. There were no plans to amend article 44 (5) of the Military Service Law.

36. **A representative of Latvia** said that, as acknowledged by the European Court of Human Rights in its judgment in the case *Savickis and Others v. Latvia*, all non-citizens had a right to seek naturalization in Latvia. The process might entail some effort and the fulfilment of certain conditions, but the option was available to all who wished to avail themselves of it. Between 1995 and 2025, the number of non-citizens had dropped by 77 per cent, to 173,000 people. Since 2020, all children born in Latvia to non-citizens were granted citizenship by birth. More than 530 children had been granted citizenship by birth since 2020, while a similar number of children born before 2019 had also been granted citizenship. There were currently no non-citizen children under the age of 5.

37. Information sessions continued to be held in a number of localities around the country to explain the conditions and procedures for naturalization. In addition, the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs had developed materials, including mock tests, to help non-citizens to prepare for the citizenship examination and acquire the requisite Latvian language skills. All the materials and information were available free of charge on the Office's website, which had received over 81,000 visits since 2021. Several information campaigns targeting specific groups of non-citizens had been carried out, including on television, the radio and social media.

38. **A representative of Latvia** said that citizenship was a prerequisite to voting or standing for office, and non-citizens could acquire full voting rights through naturalization. The rules regarding the language of election campaign materials and messaging did not apply to canvassing and other in-person campaign activities and were limited to pre-election periods, and there was an exemption for local elections and elections to the European Parliament. The Constitutional Court had ruled that the provisions in question were proportional and in line with the Constitution, as they did not impose a complete ban on the use of foreign languages by political parties, they applied only for a limited period, and they applied only to materials that had been paid for.

39. **A representative of Latvia** said that perceptions regarding access to Latvian citizenship had been lagging behind a changing reality. In the past, individuals had been prevented from acquiring Latvian citizenship by the lack of a legislative framework. Now, however, the path to citizenship was simple and short, and he struggled to explain why so many people chose not to avail themselves of the opportunity. Indeed, individuals who had lived in the country for decades should not have difficulty with the language or with local realities.

40. **A representative of Latvia** said that the Constitutional Court had adopted two judgments concerning the 2022 phase of the education sector reform, basing its rulings on the fact that the Russian language remained widespread in Latvia and that some persons belonging to minorities were insufficiently proficient in Latvian, making them vulnerable to Russian disinformation. It had ruled that the amendments relating to the reform did not violate article 27 of the Convention because the measures they introduced were gradual and because they provided for programmes through which members of linguistic minorities could learn their own languages.

41. **Mr. Šimonović** asked whether he was correct in thinking that the law took precedence over the National Security Concept of 28 September 2023 and that, consequently, any actions taken in implementation of the Concept prior to the ruling of the Constitutional Court on its constitutionality would be illegal.

42. **Mr. Helfer** said that he would like to know what criteria would be used to determine whether the enhanced border regime could be lifted. He had not yet received an answer to his questions regarding the investigation into the alleged ill-treatment of migrants at the border with Belarus in 2021 and 2022. Given that a large number of children remained ineligible for Latvian citizenship under the law on the status of non-citizen that had entered into force in 2019, he wondered what steps would be taken to amend the Citizenship Law to ensure that citizenship was granted automatically to all children born in Latvia who would otherwise be stateless. Lastly, he would like clarification as to whether honourable discharge on grounds of conscientious objection could be granted to serving members of the armed forces who had requested early termination of their military service contract.

43. **Ms. Donders** said she was not convinced that the complete exclusion of non-citizens from election processes was justified. There were a number of valid reasons why long-term residents might choose not to apply for Latvian citizenship, and they should not be denied the opportunity to participate in political processes on that basis. In order to promote participation in elections, it could help to produce election campaign materials in several languages, even if the election process was to be conducted in the national language.

44. It would be useful if the delegation could expand on its response to her questions regarding interest-related education programmes for children belonging to national minorities, as it remained unclear whether those programmes were effective in preventing the exclusion of minority languages from education.

45. **Mr. Ndiaye** said that he had not yet received answers to his questions on the use and effectiveness of non-custodial alternatives to pretrial detention; the steps taken to ensure the timely issuance of judgments; and the measures in place to ensure that, in the area of juvenile justice, detention was used only as a last resort and for the shortest possible time.

46. **A representative of Latvia** said that, although policy documents were not legally binding, they were supposed to be aligned with the relevant laws. Any legislation that was found to be unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court must be amended. Public broadcasting organizations were bound by the laws currently in force.

47. **A representative of Latvia** said that the main criterion that would need to be met for the enhanced border regime to be lifted was the re-establishment of cooperation with the Belarusian authorities. The Latvian authorities stood ready to cooperate, but the Belarusian authorities were refusing to engage with them. As a result, there had been an increase in irregular migration and organized crime in the border area. In 2024, some 50 people had been arrested and detained for facilitating irregular migration. The enhanced border regime would remain in place for as long as the border remained unsafe.

48. **A representative of Latvia** said that the alleged violence against migrants at the border with Belarus between August 2021 and February 2022 had been investigated thoroughly by the Internal Security Bureau. During the investigation, the Bureau had reviewed a large amount of material, including photographs, videos, testimony from more than 150 officials and statements provided by migrants. The Bureau had closed the investigation in November 2022, having concluded that any injuries sustained by migrants had not been caused by State officials. It was possible that migrants had been injured while crossing the border or as a result of spending several days in the forest. The investigation had been supervised by the General Prosecutor's Office, and information about the outcomes of the investigation had been released to the media.

49. **A representative of Latvia** said that there were procedures in place to enable non-citizen children born before 1 January 2020 to apply for citizenship. The average processing time for such applications was one month. There were therefore no plans to amend the Citizenship Law.

50. **A representative of Latvia** said that applications for alternative service were examined by the Conscription Control Commission, in accordance with the procedures set out in the Administrative Procedure Law. Once an administrative decision on conscription into military service had become final, a review of the decision could be requested on the grounds that the circumstances of the case had changed. The grounds on which early termination of a military service contract could be sought were not specified in national law. All terminations were based on mutual agreement and governed by the same conditions.

51. **A representative of Latvia** said that the decision to apply for citizenship was, of course, a personal choice. However, the Constitution stated that only citizens had the right to vote or to be elected. Latvia was a small country made up of many different communities, and the Latvian language was a core element that connected those communities and facilitated their integration. The use of other languages during political campaigning was not prohibited. The requirement to use Latvian in campaign materials applied only to the pre-election period, which was defined as the 120 days prior to an election.

52. **A representative of Latvia** said it was understandable that a small country with a history of occupation would want its citizens to be united under one flag and one language and to demonstrate their patriotism. The language test that formed part of the citizenship application process was not very demanding. It did not seem fair that non-citizens who were unwilling to learn enough Latvian to be able to pass that test and sing the national anthem should be granted the right to vote.

53. **A representative of Latvia** said that the transition to using Latvian as the sole language of instruction in schools was not happening unreasonably fast, and the schools, teachers, students and parents affected by the reform were being provided with targeted support and resources. The implementation of education programmes for minorities was related to the transition to a competency-based learning approach and the promotion of the acquisition of Latvian. Teachers were being trained to use a variety of teaching methods

suited to a linguistically diverse environment, taking into account the strengths of students whose native language was not Latvian. A regulation setting out a sample interest-related education programme for minorities had been adopted in August 2023. The sample programme was designed to be taught by preschool and primary school teachers, in person or remotely, and to involve up to three hours of teaching per week. A significant amount of money had been made available in grants to support minority languages and cultures. The implementation of the reform was being monitored and supported by a range of bodies, including the Advisory Council on Minority Education of the Ministry of Education and Science.

54. **A representative of Latvia** said that, as at 25 June 2025, the juvenile detention facility in Cēsis had 27 inmates, of whom 16 were under 18 years old and 11 were between 18 and 25 years old. Only four of those inmates were in pretrial detention. By contrast, 135 minors had been put on probation in 2024. Those figures illustrated that minors were imprisoned only as a last resort.

55. The statistics that she had provided on the time taken to issue judgments had been based on average times, meaning that there were many cases in which judgments had been issued more quickly. The Criminal Law provided that an offender's final sentence could be reduced, as a form of compensation, if the judgment had not been handed down within a reasonable time.

56. **A representative of Latvia** said that electronic monitoring could be used as a non-custodial alternative in cases involving one or more specific offences. The offences concerned – of which there were seven – included bodily harm, stalking and violation of a temporary protection order. Electronic monitoring was used in combination with other security measures, such as house arrest and restraining orders. An evaluation would be carried out before the end of 2027 to assess whether electronic monitoring should be used more broadly.

57. **A representative of Latvia**, thanking the Committee for the open and constructive dialogue, said that important points had been raised on a wide range of issues, including gender equality, hate crime and the rights of prisoners. Despite the threats faced by Latvia, as its neighbours, Russia and Belarus, deployed the full arsenal of hybrid warfare, the country remained steadfast in its commitment to the rule of law, the protection of human rights and the principle of a rules-based international order. The dialogue had been a valuable opportunity to demonstrate how the country's legal framework, institutional practices and policy measures complied with and gave effect to the provisions of the Covenant. The Government looked forward to continuing its constructive engagement with the Committee.

58. **The Chair**, thanking the delegation for the dialogue, said that the Committee wished to commend the State Party for the progress made in areas such as gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities. Remaining areas of concern included the prohibition of torture, the treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees, and the rights of minorities. The Committee appreciated the responses provided by the delegation and hoped to see continued progress towards the full implementation of the Covenant.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.