



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 2073rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 1 March 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Kemal

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

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

Eighth and ninth periodic reports of the Republic of Moldova (CERD/C/MDA/8-9; CERD/C/MDA/Q/8-9; HRI/CORE/1/Add.14)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the Republic of Moldova took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Beleacova** (Republic of Moldova), introducing her country's combined eighth and ninth periodic reports (CERD/C/MDA/8-9), said that since the consideration of the previous report the Government had taken numerous steps to prevent discrimination motivated by race, skin colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, and to promote and protect the rights of national minorities. As described in paragraph 13 of the current report, the multi-ethnic and multilingual population formed a single people with a long tradition of inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance. Racial discrimination was rare in her country, and no political parties or NGOs promoted racial, religious or ethnic hatred.
3. As a Member of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Moldova had undertaken several international obligations relating to the protection of the rights of national minorities, including ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious freedoms. Domestic legislation prohibited racial hatred, intolerance, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, protected human rights and freedoms, and banned discrimination on grounds of race and ethnicity. Moldova had signed over 40 international human rights instruments, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe. In response to its third report under the latter Convention, a group of experts had visited the country and commended Moldova for its comprehensive policy on national minorities, and especially for upholding their educational rights.
4. Partly in response to the recommendations of Council of Europe resolution CM/ResCMN(2010)6 and the Committee's previous concluding observations (CERD/C/MDA/CO/7), the Government had drawn up its 2011–2014 programme entitled "European Integration: Freedom, Democracy, Welfare". The section on human rights recognized the Committee's competence to receive and consider individual communications under article 14 of the Convention and set out steps to improve the normative and institutional framework in order to prevent discrimination on grounds of religious belief.
5. The section of the programme on the integration of national minorities included provisions on preserving and developing their cultural and linguistic heritage. It also contained a comprehensive national policy to promote education in minority languages and modernize legislation to ensure that members of minorities were integrated into the country's social, administrative, cultural, political and economic fabric.
6. The 2011–2014 human rights action plan contained specific measures such as training courses on human rights and fundamental freedoms, continued work on draft legislation to prevent and combat discrimination, plans to set up a commission to follow up recommendations from United Nations human rights treaty bodies and the Council of Europe, and strengthening the normative and institutional framework for religious associations. It also included an action plan to support the Roma population.
7. The European integration programme formed part of the dialogue the Government had entered into with the European Union (EU) with a view to furthering links with that

institution. Under the terms of the dialogue, Moldova planned to introduce new legislation and a national strategy on the integration of foreigners and asylum-seekers. In February 2011, the Bureau for Migration and Asylum within the Ministry of Internal Affairs had introduced a simplified migration documentation procedure, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration. It would enable the Bureau to provide up to 100 applicants a day with the documents they required for residence in Moldova, be they foreigners, stateless persons, refugees or students. Over 4,000 foreigners and stateless persons from over 95 countries had applied for immigrant status in the period 2009–2010: almost 40 per cent for family reunification, almost 30 per cent for work and almost 30 per cent to study. The remainder had come to perform religious, humanitarian or voluntary work. They were granted temporary residence permits in the first instance.

8. The 2011–2014 human rights action plan contained a section on preventing racial discrimination and protecting the rights of national minorities. It included measures to raise public awareness about acts of discrimination and the rights of all minorities, and to promote tolerance and mutual respect among civil servants. It also stipulated that research would be carried out on the possibility of ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

9. The Roma represented 0.4 per cent of the population, according to the 2004 census. The 2007–2010 action plan to support the Roma population had aimed to improve their standard of living and level of integration by focusing on education, culture, health, child protection, social welfare, employment and public order. As a result, public officials at all levels had become more aware of the situation of the Roma and begun cooperating with Roma organizations. More Roma children had been attending school and Roma medical staff had begun working in areas with a high Roma population. Under the Ministry of Education, local commissions had been set up to encourage Roma families to send their children to school, and free school meals and textbooks had been provided as an incentive. Other financial and material support was available from local mayors' offices to buy school uniforms and books. Schools in areas with high Roma populations also provided extra classes on Roma culture and traditions.

10. In addition, the Ministry of Health had taken steps to ensure the Roma had free access to health services, including information about healthy lifestyles and reproductive health. Roma women, children and newborns had the same rights to free health care and medicines as the rest of the population. Those suffering from conditions such as diabetes, tuberculosis, cancer, asthma and mental illnesses received free medication.

11. Roma families were also entitled to income support to ensure their monthly income was equivalent to the minimum established by the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and the Family. The Roma were entitled to the same job-seekers' assistance and career guidance as other citizens. Specific employment services, including information on traditional occupations, were provided for the Roma in some areas with a high Roma population. The Bureau for Inter-Ethnic Relations had prepared an action plan to support the Roma population for the period 2011–2014, in cooperation with several ministries and Roma associations. The necessary resources had been allocated for the plan.

12. The Roma enjoyed the same status and rights as those of other national minorities in Moldova. A Roma party had participated in the 2010 parliamentary elections, winning almost 2,400 votes. Civil society and NGOs had played a more prominent role in recent years in promoting equality and non-discrimination and monitoring human rights. Research had shown that, in 2011, the Roma continued to suffer discrimination, particularly in the fields of education and health. While NGOs did receive complaints about discrimination, regrettably few such complaints were submitted to the authorities for investigation and action, which clearly affected official statistics on reported cases of discrimination.

13. The 2004 census had shown Eastern Orthodox Christians to be the dominant religious group in Moldova, while members of other established groups such as Jews, Muslims and Catholics accounted for less than 2 per cent of the population.

14. The State was committed to respecting the constitutional rights of all citizens, in particular the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The Muslim community, like all other citizens, enjoyed the unrestricted right to freedom of assembly guaranteed under Act No. 26-XVI. The community exercised that right by holding weekly meetings for collective prayer. The Act, which guaranteed equality before the law, provided for the mandatory registration of all religious groups with the Ministry of Justice. The decision to register a group was taken on the basis of the supporting documentation submitted to the Ministry.

15. In anticipation of the next census, her Government had begun preparations to align regulatory texts with United Nations recommendations. The census would provide the Government with comprehensive statistical data that would enable it to better address the issues arising from international conventions.

16. The Government supported initiatives to combat anti-Semitism and had taken steps to foster greater public understanding of the Holocaust, such as incorporating a Holocaust component in the history curriculum in schools. The destruction of the Hanukkah menorah in Chişinău in December 2009 had been widely condemned by the Government, political parties and religious leaders alike.

17. The Bureau for Inter-Ethnic Relations was the central specialized body responsible for the implementation of Government policy concerning national ethnic minorities. Its primary function was to protect the rights and cultural identity of ethnic minorities while simultaneously combating racial discrimination. It was also responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of various international standards relating to the rights of ethnic minorities.

18. The Coordinating Board of Ethnocultural Organizations was a public advisory body on the rights of members of ethnic minorities and the legal status of their organizations. The Bureau for Inter-Ethnic Relations viewed the Board as an intermediary in consultations with ethnocultural organizations on the formulation and implementation of Government policy on issues relating to ethnic minorities. The Board operated on the principle of equal representation, which meant that the leaders of all ethnocultural organizations recognized by the Bureau and registered with the Ministry of Justice sat on the Board, regardless of the size of the ethnic minority and the number of its registered organizations.

19. The House of Nationalities acted as a forum for the numerous ethnocultural organizations in Moldova and planned events aimed at fostering intercultural tolerance and dialogue. It had also organized a major round-table discussion involving ethnic minority groups and civil society on the current and future status of languages in Moldova in order to coincide with International Mother Language Day.

20. The Bureau for Inter-Ethnic Relations, together with the Human Rights Centre and the OSCE office for national minorities, was contemplating a long-term programme to promote the official languages of Moldova by removing social constraints and raising their profile in the public sphere. To that end, the Government had passed a decree whereby financial resources were allocated to language training for ethnic minorities and, in particular, to the production of specially-adapted textbooks for adult learners of the national language.

21. In an effort to pre-empt acts of racial discrimination, the Moldovan authorities had taken steps to align the conduct of police officers with European standards. Those steps had included the incorporation of national and international norms into police training, the

establishment of a complaints procedure, the recruitment of members of ethnic minorities and the exchange of information with those minorities.

22. During the period covered by the report, no cases of racial discrimination under articles 135 and 346 of the Criminal Code had been recorded.

23. **Mr. Thornberry** (Country Rapporteur) noted with satisfaction that, as part of its National Action Plan for Human Rights, Moldova was planning to declare that it recognized the Committee's competence to consider individual communications under article 14 of the Convention.

24. The Committee took note of the fact that the State party gave precedence to international instruments in the event of inconsistencies with national law, but recalled that most of the provisions of the Convention were not self-executing and necessitated specific legislation to ensure their full implementation, particularly article 4 on hate speech.

25. The Committee noted with interest that the Roma had not been mentioned in the statistics provided on the Moldovan population, particularly since the 2004 census had shown at least small numbers of Roma. In view of the conflicting estimates of the number of Roma resident in Moldova, the Committee would like to know the exact category assigned to Roma in the census, the census methodology used, the instances of individuals affiliating themselves with more than one category and whether self-identification featured in the census. It would also be useful to know whether there were methodologies that could complement the census so as to better assess progress achieved in the area of social inclusion.

26. The Committee wished to know whether the word "*cigan*" was officially used to refer to members of the Roma community, particularly since it ran counter to the Committee's general recommendation on the designation of Roma.

27. With regard to intersectional issues such as race and gender, the Committee regretted the lack of gender disaggregation in the report but noted that some progress had been achieved in the area of gender. It would be useful to receive data relating to the crossover between gender and ethnicity, particularly as the gender perspective often fell within the Committee's area of competence.

28. While the Committee recognized the efforts made by the State party to address the situation in Transnistria, the fact that the writ of the Moldovan authorities did not extend to all territories continued to impede the full implementation of the Convention.

29. The Committee noted with concern that the bill to amend articles 176 and 346 of the Criminal Code seemed to run counter to article 16 of the Constitution, which only provided for the protection of "citizens". It requested clarification on the subject and wished to know whether there were any further mitigating elements in the Constitution.

30. The Committee endorsed any decision taken to classify racism as an aggravating factor in accordance with article 4 of the Convention and noted that article 77 of the Criminal Code classified crimes motivated by social, national, racial or religious hatred as aggravating factors. However, the Committee had received reports that such crimes were often glossed over as mere acts of hooliganism, thereby disguising the racist motivation. He would appreciate a response to that claim.

31. The Committee had always given special attention to article 4 of the Convention on the prohibition of racist organizations and, in that context, noted with concern the persistence of extremist public and religious organizations in Moldova. It did not view the fact that the procurators' offices had not challenged any public associations, religious or other organizations or media as a sign of social health but rather as a symptom of inefficient complaint mechanisms.

32. The Committee endorsed the drafting of anti-discrimination legislation or equality legislation in the absence of a legislative precedent but was convinced that sufficient prominence must be given to anti-discriminatory provisions. With reference to article 24 of the bill on discrimination, which provided for a shared burden of proof, the Committee would like the range of grounds for discrimination to be expanded so as to encompass all of those set out in article 1 of the Convention. The Committee would also welcome details of the specific penalties for racist offences.

33. With regard to parliamentary advocates, the Committee took note of the statement that any person who believed his or her rights had been violated or that he or she had been a victim of discrimination could file a complaint with an advocate. The Committee would like to know the extent to which the powers of the parliamentary advocate were exercised, particularly given their usefulness in the fight against discrimination.

34. On the issue of religion, the Committee took note of the progress achieved with regard to Muslim burial sites but drew attention to the fact that some questions persisted on the subject.

35. The registration of religions still appeared to be fraught with difficulties. The Committee would like to know whether the four public Islamic organizations that had not been excluded from the State register of public associations were actively seeking registration. It would be grateful if the State party could clearly enumerate the legal provisions governing registration that appeared in paragraph 96 of the periodic report. The Committee was concerned that the technical nature of the provisions concealed a bureaucratic approach to registration and would be interested to know whether that procedure was applied to all religious groups and whether registration formalities were negotiable.

36. The Committee recognized the common practice of according a special status to the national religion but was concerned that other religious groups could be discriminated against for not enjoying that status.

37. As to the anti-Semitic incident involving the Hanukkah menorah, the Committee wished to know whether it had been replaced and requested more information on the subject. The fact that such an incident had taken place raised questions as to the prevailing social climate in Moldova and the steps the Government had taken to improve the situation. In that context, the Committee would be interested to learn of the authorities' response to the seriousness of the incident and the measures they had adopted to prevent similar incidents in the future. The delegation might also wish to inform the Committee of the distinction drawn between "religion" and "religious communities" in the report.

38. An improvement in data collection would assist the Committee in determining the levels of disadvantage, inclusion and exclusion affecting the Roma population. The report had mentioned the increased representation of Roma in elective positions and the emergence of a Roma elite. In the light of that claim, the Committee wished to know whether any Roma had entered parliament or been appointed to posts in the public administration. Conversely, the Committee had received reports that, in reality, Roma were completely unrepresented in the public services and wished to know whether that was the case. The Committee also wished to know the extent to which racial discrimination exacerbated the problems faced by the Roma in the areas of housing, education and health.

39. In spite of the fact that increasing numbers of Roma were pursuing university studies, illiteracy and high dropout rates remained endemic in the Roma population. It would be interesting to know whether schools welcomed Roma pupils and whether there were mediators in place to liaise between parents and teachers.

40. The Committee welcomed an initiative launched in conjunction with UNICEF to integrate Roma children into the mainstream education system, and would like to hear the delegation's comments on the matter and to learn of the action plans the Government had developed to that end. It would also like to know how those plans would fit into the broader strategy of social inclusion and how that strategy would be incorporated into key areas of public administration.

41. In view of the fact that the relationship between poverty and ethnicity was often overlooked by policymakers, the Committee recommended that steps be taken to incorporate that intersectional perspective in the development of new action plans.

42. As to the new conditions for non-citizens, Moldova had been, by and large, a country of emigration and so might not be adequately equipped to deal with immigration issues. In that context, the Committee welcomed the waiving of the exit visa requirements for third-country nationals and the Government's new consolidated approach to a number of issues in that area.

43. He asked whether HIV-testing of foreigners still took place and how new legislation addressed that issue. He also asked what was meant in legislation on foreigners by the concept of tolerated status. It did not sound terribly friendly. He wondered if it was true that mastery of the Moldovan language was mandatory in order to acquire a permanent residence permit and how that requirement affected Russians who had lived in the State party for some time. He asked the delegation to comment on difficulties in finding work allegedly encountered by migrant workers from Africa and Asia.

44. On the question of education, he would be interested in receiving more information on integration programmes and language support for children of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers enrolled in the public school system, and on related teacher training for special needs. Further information on access to education in the migrant accommodation centre in Chişinău would also be welcome.

45. It appeared that religion was an important factor in Moldova's national identity, which was, however, undergoing change and was weakened by the situation in Transnistria. A raft of legislation and action plans had been put in place to give effect to the provisions of the Convention but implementation had been tardy and would need to be closely monitored.

46. Improved data-gathering would be of great assistance to the State party, as accurate statistics were a prime requirement for carrying out anti-discrimination policy efficiently.

47. **Mr. Avtonomov** noted that the State party was preparing to make a declaration under article 14 of the Convention but sought clarity on whether it was also considering ratification of the amendment to article 8. It would also be useful to know whether Moldova was a party to any treaties of the Commonwealth of Independent States, such as its charter of human rights and conventions on national and ethnic minorities and on standards for democratic elections.

48. He reiterated the Committee's request for more detailed statistics on Roma in the State party. According to one source, they numbered 250,000, far more than had been suggested by the delegation. Perhaps the discrepancy could be explained by the failure to register Roma children or attempts by Roma to conceal their identity in order to avoid discrimination. If that was the case, he asked whether measures had been taken to overcome their reluctance to be identified. Given the importance of accurate statistics in identifying the nature and extent of discrimination, he wanted to know what was being done to improve the gathering of population data. He also asked what language was used by the Roma in Moldova.

49. Turning to the incident involving the destruction of a Jewish menorah in 2009, he noted the State party's indignation over what had happened. It would, however, be useful to know what measures had subsequently been taken and whether the perpetrators had been punished.

50. With regard to allegations of a lack of transparency in the appointment of parliamentary advocates, the Committee would appreciate further information on how candidates for those positions were selected. He also wondered about the efficiency of coordination between the National Centre for Human Rights, parliamentary advocates, the Bureau for Inter-Ethnic Relations, the Coordinating Board of Ethnocultural Organizations and related bodies.

51. Noting that 92 per cent of army officers were Moldovan, a figure that suggested that ethnic minorities were underrepresented in the armed forces, he regretted the absence of statistics on their representation in parliament and the civil service. He asked whether members of minorities were reluctant to apply for such positions and whether the State party had made any attempt to monitor the situation. He would also like to know whether political parties were multi-ethnic and what their attitudes were to discrimination issues.

52. **Mr. Huang Yong'an** welcomed the existence of the National Centre for Human Rights and the Bureau for Inter-Ethnic Relations but asked whether they had sufficient human and financial resources to carry out their work efficiently. He therefore requested more detailed information on their funding. Ethnic minorities continued to constitute the most vulnerable groups in Moldovan society, in spite of measures taken to improve their lot. Poverty among the Roma was caused by a lack of education and professional training, and he expressed the hope that the State party would pay greater attention to the human rights and needs of its minorities, in particular the Roma, in the areas of housing, education, health care and employment. Progress in human rights depended largely on economic development and more attention should thus be paid to the right to development.

53. **Mr. Diaconu** welcomed the considerable progress made in the past 20 years in the State party and noted with satisfaction the introduction of a panoply of new legislation. More bills, including one to amend the Criminal Code, were under consideration and he urged the Government to enact them. He also lauded its aim to ensure ethnic coexistence through the promotion of the cultural heritage of its minorities.

54. He questioned the premise underlying Act No. 54, passed in 2003, on combating extremist activity and considered the labelling of hate speech and incitement to vandalism on the grounds of ideological, political, racial, national, religious or social hatred or hostility as extremist activities to be exaggerated. If such acts were extremist, how could one then categorize crimes against humanity and genocide? If the aim of the State party had been to identify aggravating circumstances in the perpetration of crimes, it could have done so by different means.

55. He recommended that the State party introduce measures to promote the participation of members of minorities in parliament, local authorities and other public bodies. It could establish quotas to ensure such representation or reserve posts in the public administration for them, especially in areas where they were numerous. Members of minorities should have the opportunity to represent their communities and set an example. He welcomed news that two Afro-Asian associations were represented on the Coordinating Board of Ethnocultural Organizations.

56. He asked how many Roma were still without identity papers and how the State party planned to accelerate their distribution. He welcomed progress in the area of access to education for the Roma, although more needed to be done.

57. **Mr. Murillo Martínez** wondered whether children of disadvantaged families, including the Roma, and those who were disabled or infected with the HIV virus suffered discrimination. The State party had enumerated various general policies that took into account the rights of the child, but that begged the question of structural discrimination, which perhaps called for a differentiated approach to the specific needs of certain groups who could be exposed to racial discrimination, as described in the Committee's general recommendation No. 32 on the meaning and scope of special measures in the Convention. He therefore asked what the impact of measures taken so far had been on children in disadvantaged groups and whether progress had been made in breaking the cycle of poverty into which such children were born. Should the State party not review its general legislation on children's matters with the aim of assessing its effectiveness among disadvantaged population groups and, where appropriate, adopt specific measures for those groups?

58. **Mr. de Gouttes** commended the State party for the regularity of its submission of periodic reports for consideration by the Committee.

59. He asked the delegation to provide more details about the action plan for human rights that was currently being drafted and about the work of the Bureau for Inter-Ethnic Relations, whose role had been strengthened by a decision adopted on 2 February 2010. He understood that a new action plan in support of the Roma population covering the period 2011–2014 was currently being drawn up in cooperation with the Roma and Travellers Division of the Council of Europe. He asked whether provision had been made for involvement of the Roma community in its preparation, for adequate budgetary support, and for effective training of teachers and public officials to ensure that members of the Roma community enjoyed full access to education, employment and social services. What measures had been taken to protect the Roma against acts of racial discrimination and to ensure that all complaints were effectively investigated by the police and the judiciary?

60. With regard to the proposed amendment of criminal legislation with a view to preventing discrimination, he asked whether the bill mentioned by the delegation was the same as that referred to in paragraph 24 of the report concerning the amendment of articles 176 and 346 of the Criminal Code. What stage had been reached in the enactment of the bill? He also enquired about legal action against the extremist activities described in paragraphs 88 and 90 of the report. The fact that very few complaints had been filed against acts of racism was not necessarily a favourable sign, since victims might be unaware of their rights or lack faith in the prospects of a successful outcome.

61. According to the report, 13 of the 17 Muslim public organizations on record in Moldova had been excluded from the State register because of their failure to submit reports on their activities for two years. The remaining organizations did not fully comply with the Public Associations Act and legal action was being taken against them. The European Court of Human Rights had considered a complaint filed by a Moldovan Muslim organization and ruled in favour of the Moldovan authorities on 14 June 2005 because they had simply applied Act No. 125-XVI of 11 May 2007 on religious denominations and religious communities. He enquired about the provisions of the Act and asked whether they were compatible with the right to freedom of religion and were applied to all religions in the country without discrimination.

62. **Mr. Saidou** noted that the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights had conferred "B" status on the Moldovan National Centre for Human Rights, which meant that it was not fully compliant with the Paris Principles. He urged the Government to review the procedure for selecting members of the National Centre, to provide it with adequate resources and to ensure that its work did not overlap with that of the Ombudsman and the Bureau for Inter-Ethnic Relations.

63. He asked why 13 Muslim organizations that had previously fulfilled the requirements for inclusion in the State register had now been excluded.
64. **Ms. Crickley** said that if one of the aims of the recently drafted anti-discrimination legislation had been to support Moldovan membership of the EU, provision should also have been made for the establishment of an independent body for the promotion of equality.
65. The process of registration of religions was, in her view, almost invariably conducive to discrimination, especially against smaller religions and Islam.
66. She shared the concerns of other Committee members about the situation of the Roma community. The use of terminology other than that preferred by the community itself was an infringement of rights. Moreover, inclusion policies designed to ensure non-discrimination and effective equality did not seem to be applied to the Roma.
67. Welcoming the advances achieved in the status of Moldovan women, she asked how that progress was reflected in the case of women belonging to minority groups.
68. **Mr. Kut** expressed support for the comments of other Committee members on the Roma community, anti-Semitic incidents and the situation of certain Muslim groups.
69. He requested further information about the Gagauz ethnic group. Were they represented in political positions and public affairs at the national level? And did they encounter any particular problems?
70. **Mr. Lahiri** noted that in cases where an offence was motivated by racial hatred, the penalty was rarely aggravated notwithstanding the provisions to that effect in Moldovan criminal legislation.
71. A draft comprehensive anti-discrimination law had apparently been withdrawn a few years previously because of fears that access to an adviser on homosexuality would reduce the birth rate. No provision for the enactment of such legislation was included in the new Government's programme published in 2011.
72. The Roma community, according to census data, numbered some 12,000, a figure that was widely deemed to be a dramatic under-assessment. Figures cited elsewhere, however, seemed to be impossibly high.
73. Anti-Semitism had been highlighted by an incident in December 2009 spearheaded by the Rector of the Orthodox Saint Paraskevi Church in Chişinău. No law enforcement officials had intervened and the statement subsequently issued by the Orthodox bishopric left much to be desired.
74. The grounds invoked by the authorities to prevent the registration of Muslim groups were allegedly quite technical and could be construed as mere pretexts. There was no provision for separate burial of Muslims in spite of the Committee's recommendations to that effect. There had also been reports of ethno-religiously motivated document checks outside Muslim places of worship.
75. Data on racially motivated crime were inadequate. Dark-skinned migrants, refugees and persons or groups who were identifiably non-Moldovan were allegedly exposed to harassment and sometimes violence on racial or ethnic grounds. United Nations staff had reportedly witnessed the harsh treatment of African and Asian migrants by public officials charged with examining the various forms required for renewal of status. While he was not asserting that such conduct was sanctioned by the State authorities, he submitted that a far more proactive approach involving public information and punitive action was required on the part of public officials.
76. **Mr. Lindgren Alves** said that he had engaged three times in a dialogue with representatives of Moldova since joining the Committee nine years previously. He

commended the State party for its regular reporting and for the progress it had made in promoting equality and human rights.

77. The delegation had referred to a Roma elite. He asked whether the members of that elite identified themselves individually or collectively as Roma or Moldovans. If they identified themselves as Moldovans, did other Moldovans view them as fully fledged compatriots?

78. He asked whether political parties based on ethnicity were permitted in Moldova and whether there were any such parties.

79. Lastly, he wished to know more about the prospects for some kind of understanding between Moldova and the Transnistrian region, which had declared independence.

80. **Ms. Dah** joined other Committee members in commending Moldova for its regular reports on compliance with the Convention. She had also been struck by the State party's careful point-by-point references to issues raised during the previous dialogue. Although a great deal remained to be done, the progress made by Moldova in overcoming historical setbacks, bringing together national minorities and opening up to multiculturalism was impressive.

81. **Mr. Amir** asked whether the State party's statistics concerning action against discrimination also covered the region of Transnistria. The Committee had no information, for instance, concerning the ethnic composition of the region. After all, from the standpoint of international law, Transnistria was still part of Moldova.

82. He saw no improvement in the situation of religious minorities since the Committee's previous dialogue with the State party, for instance in the regulations governing the registration of religious associations. Such administrative barriers fomented ill will. The Muslim community, for instance, felt that it was unrecognized and subject to discrimination. He hoped that the State party's next report would inform the Committee that religious associations had been registered and were functioning normally within the framework of national legislation.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.