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Summary record of the 22nd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 1 June 2015, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Sadi

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Consideration of reports

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant

Combined second and third periodic reports of Kyrgyzstan (E/C.12/KGZ/2-3; E/C.12/KGZ/Q/2-3 and Add.1; HRI/CORE/KGZ/2008)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Kyrgyzstan took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Zhekshenov** (Kyrgyzstan), introducing the combined second and third periodic reports of Kyrgyzstan (E/C.12/KGZ/2-3), said that the document had been prepared by an inter-agency working group, which had assessed the human rights situation, identified the reasons for human rights violations and recorded both progress achieved and the problems that remained. The country's legislation had been improved with the constitutional reforms undertaken in 2010, when, in the teeth of attacks on the country's sovereignty and unity, Kyrgyzstan had taken the path of parliamentary democracy. A parliament had been elected and a coalition Government formed. Following the elections in October 2011, Kyrgyzstan had established a new tradition of the peaceful transfer of power. It was the only country in the region to continue in that direction, and the current year's fair and transparent elections were the guarantor of public trust and thus of stability and security.
3. The population of Kyrgyzstan, which was relatively young, numbered 5,776,570, with men and women of working age each comprising 26.7 per cent of the population. The birth rate was rising: in 2014, there had been 159,634 births, as against 155,520 in 2013. Most of the population — 66.4 per cent — lived in rural areas. The Government gave priority to equitable social development, as reflected in its National Strategy for Sustainable Development for the period 2013–2017, and had allocated 63.4 per cent of the 2014 State budget to social expenditure. The Government's economic policy had succeeded in maintaining macroeconomic stability, with the result that, in 2012–2014, the economy had grown by 4.8 per cent a year and gross domestic product by 3.8 per cent a year.
4. Efforts were being made to reduce poverty by providing social assistance to the most vulnerable sectors of the population and stimulating economic activity, thereby improving their economic prospects. The level of poverty remained an acute social problem, however, even though it had fallen to 37 per cent in 2013 as a result of a number of economic and social measures taken by the Government and would fall still further after other measures had been taken to ensure economic growth while protecting the environment. Extreme poverty, meanwhile, had fallen from 17.8 per cent in 2000 to 6.6 per cent in 2007 and 2.8 per cent in 2013.
5. In January 2015, the monthly benefits paid to poor families had been raised by means of a 10.2 per cent increase in the guaranteed minimum income. Reforms to the national health system were also aimed at improving the overall health of the nation and of every individual, regardless of his or her social status or sex. A strategy for the development of education for the period 2012–2020 was also under way, with a view to resolving various social, economic, educational and managerial problems. One challenge in the pension system was to raise payments to pensioners to the minimum subsistence level: the number of pensioners receiving less than that had fallen from 64 per cent of the total (362,300) in 2012 to 57 per cent (336,000) in 2014. At the beginning of 2015, there had been 590,400 pensioners, receiving an average monthly pension of US\$ 80, a rise of US\$ 10 by comparison with 2012. The low level of pension payments was largely due to general economic conditions and, to a lesser extent, to the structure or functioning of the pension system itself. The size of the average pension remained inadequate in comparison

with the average wage, but Government Decision No. 670 of 24 November 2014 aimed to address that problem.

6. The Labour Code had been drawn up to take into account the conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on labour relations, the aim being to establish guarantees for workers' rights and freedoms, create acceptable working conditions and protect workers' rights and interests. Equal pay for equal work was obligatory and women and men were equally entitled to benefits and guarantees. The Labour Code prohibited discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, ethnicity, language, origin, age or political convictions. The fundamental document underpinning social and labour relations countrywide was the general agreement for the period 2013–2015 between the Government, the trade unions and the employers' federation.

7. Under the Constitution, a person was entitled to enter or leave the country freely. One tenth of the population of Kyrgyzstan thus worked abroad, mostly in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. The children of working migrants who lived with their parents were entitled to attend preschool institutions and school. The Government was also successfully reforming the system of technical education, to prepare specialized workers for the national and international labour markets.

8. In 2012, Kyrgyzstan had adopted the National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality by 2020 — the first country in Central Asia to do so — which set out such development priorities as women's participation in the economy, education for girls and women, access to justice and political equality. The strategy aimed at creating the conditions for realizing the potential of women, including rural women, older women, women with disabilities and the most vulnerable categories of women, those with HIV/AIDS, drug addicts and women in places of detention. A programme had also been adopted to develop the State system for the compilation of statistics to include international standards, with a view to integrating gender indicators into the collection and processing of statistical data. The compilations of the National Statistics Committee on the situation of men and women in Kyrgyzstan were considered by experts to be the best in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

9. There had been clear progress over the years in changing attitudes to violence against women, especially domestic violence. Thus, whereas in 1999 a survey of the situation of women had only characterized the abduction of brides and polygamy as "negative" and referred to the "abusive traditions" of the Kyrgyz people, modern-day politicians now acknowledged the criminal nature of abduction and polygamy and had put in place practical measures to prevent such crimes. The Criminal Code contained a separate article on the abduction of women for forced marriage. Until recently, the maximum penalty had been 3 years' imprisonment, but that penalty had been increased to 7 years in 2013, and 10 years in cases where the victim was a minor.

10. Although much remained to be done in the area of human rights, the political will existed to do everything possible to strengthen the supremacy of the law and democratic institutions. Every effort was being made to bring legislation into line with the new Constitution and the country's international human rights obligations. A new Government policy on legislation and its implementation was under development, with a view to reforming the law enforcement and judicial systems.

11. Kyrgyzstan had established a coordinating council on human rights, thus demonstrating its commitment to the highest values enshrined in the international human rights system. The council's mandate was to conduct regular monitoring of the observance of human rights and freedoms, take measures to implement the recommendations of international human rights bodies and engage in meetings with representatives of civil society and other interested parties with a view to discussing and drafting recommendations.

The council was an advisory body, made up of the heads of the State bodies involved in protecting human rights, strengthening inter-ethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan and promoting the notion of civic identity. It had been in existence for a year and was helping to incorporate the provisions of international human rights law into the work of State bodies and to raise awareness of them in Kyrgyz society.

12. Another priority for the Government was to strengthen inter-ethnic relations. An agency set up to provide support for ethnic and youth groups and women's associations, among others, had allocated grants totalling 6,104,000 soms to 16 mini-projects, including some that would improve conditions for the learning of native languages.

13. **Mr. Abashidze** (Country Rapporteur) said that, over the past two years, the State party had submitted reports to five of the international human rights treaty bodies, but the Committee itself had unfortunately had to wait eight years for the submission of the report under consideration. On the other hand, he commended Kyrgyzstan for having hosted five special rapporteurs between 2005 and 2013. He noted that the statistics provided in the periodic report went up only to 2011. It was therefore important for the Committee to be given detailed up-to-date statistics, so that it could gauge the progress made. In that connection, he wondered whether the country's legislation was in line with the new Constitution of 2010. He also asked how well the Government targeted its programmes, in view of the shortage of available resources.

14. The State party had failed to answer a number of long-standing questions. First, he noted that Kyrgyzstan was still 136th on the Corruption Perceptions Index, out of 175 countries, and he asked what practical measures the Government had adopted, given that corruption could have a detrimental impact in a country that lacked resources. Secondly, he asked how the Covenant was implemented by the courts: the report contained no examples of its citation and the Committee had heard of cases in which the judicial system had, for example, upheld the unlawful appropriation of property. The Committee would welcome information about the judicial system and the qualification of judges. Thirdly, he asked whether the State party would ratify the Optional Protocol to the Covenant, given that the Constitution gave a person the right to lodge a complaint against a court verdict, which was precisely the point of the Optional Protocol.

15. Noting that the State party had legislation relating to individual forms of discrimination, he asked whether the Government had any plans to adopt a comprehensive law against discrimination. Moreover, although the State party had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2012, it had not yet ratified it and he wondered whether such ratification was expected, since the Convention was important in ensuring access for persons with disabilities to education and health and assuring them of the right to work. It also appeared that the current registration procedure prevented people who moved from one location to another within Kyrgyzstan — and stateless persons residing in the country — from obtaining access to social services, education, health services or, indeed, work, in addition to the difficulties in obtaining access to justice on the grounds of religion, ethnicity, age or financial status. Lastly, he said that, although the number of men and women in the country was almost identical, women were predominantly employed in jobs that paid a lower salary, such as in the education and health sectors. Women were also at a disadvantage when it came to the ownership of land and housing. He asked what measures the Government was taking to rectify the situation.

16. **Mr. De Schutter** said that, according to the State party's report, 395 cases of corruption had been uncovered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and 292 by the State service for combating economic crime and he requested the delegation to put those figures in context. For example, what was the period covered and which areas were most affected? Corruption could affect many areas of life, such as the underenforcement of regulations on pollution or access to social housing or to health and safety. He further asked what the

financial costs of corruption were and what impact they had on State budgets by reducing the amount of funding available. Lastly, he noted that, according to paragraph 69 of the report, women were overrepresented in professions where salaries were lowest and he asked what kind of action the Government was taking in that regard.

17. **Mr. Kedzia** asked how the Ombudsman and other national human rights institutions worked with each other in order to protect the victims of human rights violations and to safeguard economic, social and cultural rights. The State party had not indicated whether the resources granted to the institutions fully covered their needs, nor had it described any steps taken to ensure their compliance with the Paris Principles. From the information given in paragraph 85 of the replies to the list of issues, it seemed that the Government appreciated the contribution of non-governmental organizations; he had therefore been puzzled to learn that draft legislation before the parliament would qualify NGOs receiving support from partner organizations abroad as “foreign agents”. He wondered whether Kyrgyzstan was a party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption and, if so, whether it planned to establish an independent institution to tackle corruption.

18. **Mr. Ribeiro Leão** requested the State party to provide examples of the reforms to public, social and economic life mentioned in paragraph 22 of its combined second and third reports.

19. **Ms. Shin**, referring to paragraphs 18 and 19 of the replies to the list of issues, asked whether the fifth priority area under the national strategy for achieving gender equality concerned combating violence against women. She asked who was in charge of the inter-agency working group which had formulated the decision concerning the national strategy for achieving gender equality and the national action plan on gender equality. She wished to know whether sexual orientation was included in the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination. She sought further information concerning the bill before parliament that classed NGOs as foreign agents since she was concerned that the draft legislation, if passed, could block their activities in Kyrgyzstan; she did not believe that international organizations that provided support to the Government were classed in a similar fashion.

20. **Mr. Uprimny Yepes** said that, although international human rights legislation had been incorporated in domestic law, it was not generally applied by the courts: he asked how the State party planned to overcome that problem. He recalled that the Committee had requested, but not received, examples of court cases in which the Covenant had been invoked. He sought an explanation for the bill under which NGOs receiving financial support from partner organizations abroad would be classed as foreign agents since he feared that it would be detrimental to the protection of human rights in Kyrgyzstan. With respect to gender parity, there had been little success in increasing the numbers of women appointed to higher and executive posts in the civil service. He wondered why the strategy to improve the representation of women in the civil service had been introduced solely on a provisional basis. The State party had not introduced legislation prohibiting all forms of discrimination in accordance with the Committee’s general comment No. 20 on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights and no sanctions were applied in cases of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. He was concerned to learn that, under the terms of a new draft law, homosexuality would be punished.

21. **Ms. Bras Gomes**, noting that that the principle of non-discrimination was included in the Constitution of Kyrgyzstan, asked what justification could be given for the introduction of a bill that incriminated the dissemination of information aimed at forming a positive attitude towards non-traditional forms of sexual relations since it could lead to stereotyping and could threaten the work of NGOs on respect for, protection of and fulfilment of the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community. Given their impact on the fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights, she inquired what action the Government had taken to reduce regional economic disparities

within the national plan for sustainable development and to ensure optimum distribution of resources.

22. **The Chairperson**, speaking in his capacity as a member of the Committee, asked to what extent policymakers had an awareness of the Covenant and how much it influenced decisions taken at ministerial level.

23. **Ms. Bras Gomes**, referring to article 6, asked whether the State party planned to provide cover through labour legislation and social protection for the significant number of persons employed in the informal sector in Kyrgyzstan. Although required by law, it appeared that 90 per cent of employees did not have a written contract of employment and therefore they were not covered by labour or social legislation. She asked whether the State party envisaged taking measures, such as providing information, training and pension protection, to improve the situation of external migrants, in particular unskilled workers in Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation.

24. Turning to article 9, she noted that contributions to the Social Fund were required in order to provide benefits; she asked whether people's failure to contribute to it stemmed from the perception that resources were misallocated or that the Fund suffered from management weaknesses. She asked whether the Government could increase the minimum wage as a matter of priority in order to help those most in need, in keeping with the core requirement of the Covenant to protect human dignity. She was concerned that the monthly allowance for low-income families, mentioned in paragraph 50 of the State party's reply to the list of issues, was to be replaced in part by subsidies for boarding school places.

25. **Mr. De Schutter** asked how the labour inspectorate was resourced and what efforts were made to report workers employed in the informal sector to the social security system. It was his understanding that the labour inspectorate was understaffed and that it was unable to perform its duties. He had been glad to learn from the delegation that a decree reforming the pensions system had been adopted in December 2014; he wished to know whether the minimum old-age pension was aligned with the cost of living and whether a mechanism had been put in place to ensure progressive increases in future years.

26. **Mr. Ribeiro Leão**, referring to article 6 and to the table in paragraph 36 of the State party report, asked whether action had been taken to address the situation of the large number of persons with disabilities who were economically inactive. Turning to article 7 and to paragraph 67 of the report, he asked whether measures had been developed to stop qualified professionals and senior managers from leaving the public sector to work in the private sector as a result of the disparities in wage rates.

27. **Mr. Kedzia** said that, although information had been provided on the numbers of persons who were economically active or inactive, detailed information on the unemployment rate would be appreciated, particularly in the light of the information that the labour force participation rate stood at 64 per cent for persons aged 15 or older. He wondered whether adjustments had been made to education programmes in order to assist graduates in finding employment. Information would also be welcome on the measures taken to protect the labour and trade union rights of the large number of migrant workers who had left to find work in Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. Had programmes been put in place to protect the families of external migrant workers? He sought replies to the questions in the list of issues concerning trade union rights and the amendment to the Criminal Code according to which directors and staff of strategically important enterprises could be imprisoned for stoppage of production.

28. **Mr. Abashidze** said the Government had declared that asylum seekers had the right to work although only officially recognized refugees and registered foreigners appeared to have that right in practice. He asked what systems were in place to assist former prisoners in finding work. Had the State party provided compensation in respect of occupational

diseases or for deaths or injuries in the workplace and what steps had been taken to prevent their occurrence? Were State old-age pension payments reduced for those still in employment?

29. **Mr. Uprimny Yepes**, referring to paragraph 85 of the State party report, asked why Kyrgyzstan had not ratified the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98) and the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151).

30. **Mr. Martynov** commended the State party on its efforts to effect change despite a very difficult economic situation. Given the fact that nearly one third of vocational training was provided in private facilities, he asked who covered the tuition costs. Referring to paragraph 27 of the replies to the list of issues, he wished to know whether the draft government programme 2015–2017 on reducing the informal economy had in fact been adopted and implemented. He requested further details about the government programme's stated objectives. Regarding quotas on the employment of persons with disabilities, he asked what the selection criteria were and, in the light of reports that the quota was not filled because the candidates lacked the requisite qualifications, what vocational training was available to persons with disabilities and whether it matched the needs of the market. Commending the State party on the introduction of an indexed minimum wage, he asked how it compared to the minimum subsistence level. Lastly, he wondered why as many as 40 per cent of persons with disabilities qualified only for the social allowance and not for disability benefits.

The meeting was suspended at 4.30 p.m. and resumed at 4.50 p.m.

31. **Ms. Altymysheva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that, pursuant to a presidential decree, six expert working groups had been established to consider legal reforms, including the introduction of provisions regarding non-discrimination. The Covenant was part of national law, the Judicial Training Centre was setting up training courses on various international instruments and focus was shifting towards encouraging judges to refer to such instruments in their decisions. The country had accepted over two thirds of the recommendations made at the universal periodic review, it had extended an invitation to four special mandate holders and maintained an open dialogue with all the entities of the United Nations system. There were three organizations responsible for defending human rights, namely the Office of the Ombudsman, the coordinating council for the reform of the penal correction system and the national preventive mechanism. A bill to bring the Office of the Ombudsman into line with the Paris Principles was currently before the parliament. Kyrgyzstan had recognized the competence of two treaty bodies to receive and consider individual communications, and the Constitution provided for the possibility for persons to bring an action before international courts. The Government was studying the implications of ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Covenant in the light of the costs entailed in doing so.

32. **Ms. Kutueva** (Kyrgyzstan), providing a statistical overview of the issue of corruption, said that anti-corruption efforts had been stepped up and involved several State entities, that the necessary legislation, including penalties, had been adopted and that cases of bribery were declining. Corruption had been found in many domains, but most cases were at the local level. Disciplinary, administrative or criminal measures were taken against public officials who were found guilty of corruption. More than three quarters of proceedings were initiated following inquiries by the Office of the Procurator-General.

33. The bill that would categorize NGOs that received funding from abroad as foreign agents was intended to make the structure of NGOs more transparent. Its appropriateness and constitutionality had been assessed and, although it would go through three readings, initial reactions from members of parliament had not been favourable.

34. The purpose of the bill that would criminalize the dissemination of information aimed at forming a positive attitude towards non-traditional forms of sexual relations was to prevent propaganda among impressionable children. Homosexual relations were not prohibited, but propaganda thereon would incur administrative, not criminal, penalties. The bill would be submitted for its second reading within the next few months.

35. **Ms. Kadenova** (Kyrgyzstan) said that relations between workers and employers were governed by the Labour Code. The Government had launched a programme to help people find dignified employment in Kyrgyzstan and to regulate external migration. The unemployment rate stood at 8 per cent, with some 100,000 active job-seekers competing for around 50,000 jobs annually. Regional employment agencies provided a range of services, such as advice on employment opportunities, potential careers, vocational training and even paid community service to help improve employment prospects. The Ministry of Youth, Labour and Employment liaised annually with the Ministry of Finance on increases in the minimum wage to bring it in line with the minimum substance level.

36. Migrant workers had the same rights as Kyrgyz nationals with the exception of voting and running for office. There were no restrictions on access for them or their families to education or health or social services and migrants were generally subject to a lower rate of income tax than Kyrgyz citizens. Many Kyrgyz nationals sought seasonal work abroad, with the majority finding employment in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. People employed within the member States of the Eurasian Economic Community customs union benefited from certain preferential guarantees, such as those related to residence and employment rights and free movement across borders. If an employment contract was terminated after 90 days, the migrant worker was free to take up another contract with the same or another employer within 15 days. Many qualifications were recognized throughout the area of the customs union, with the exception of teaching, medicine and pharmaceutical diplomas, and any work carried out within that zone was taken into consideration in terms of pension contributions. Lastly, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had deemed that the recently amended law on refugees was compliant with international standards. Initiatives to integrate refugees into local communities included offering Kyrgyz citizenship, which some 9,000 refugees had so far been awarded.

37. **Mr. Atangana** said that, although a number of measures to tackle domestic violence had been outlined in the State party report, it was unclear whether they had actually been fully implemented. Domestic violence remained at worryingly high levels; victims did not always have access to justice and, in some cases, they were actively discouraged by law enforcement officials from filing a complaint. Concrete information on what was being done to strengthen and enforce the legislation would therefore be appreciated.

38. **Mr. Dasgupta** said that only 28.9 per cent of people living with HIV/AIDS were being treated with antiretroviral drugs, which was a decidedly low proportion. He pointed out that South Africa had achieved a major turnaround in the treatment of HIV/AIDS by using much cheaper, generic drugs, and he wondered whether the Government had considered that approach.

39. **Mr. Pillay** said that he wished to know whether the State party intended to adopt a comprehensive housing policy, including a construction programme, to ensure that disadvantaged and marginalized groups had access to affordable and adequate accommodation and what action the Government was taking to provide housing for internal migrants living in informal settlements without access to drinking water, sanitation or other basic services. In view of the fact that ethnic minorities, most notably in Bishkek and Osh, were often at risk of forced evictions, he asked what legal safeguards were provided for in the Housing Code to prevent people from being forcibly removed from their homes or land without, for example, proper consultation and notice, access to free legal assistance,

compensation and alternative housing. It would be useful to learn whether a national survey had been carried out to identify the root causes and extent of homelessness, which was on the increase in the State party; whether community shelters had been set up; and what steps had been taken to ensure that people evicted because they could not afford their mortgage repayments were not left homeless.

40. **Ms. Ravenberg** said that, in spite of steps taken to improve health care and patient safety, some people were still prevented from accessing health care and that clinical errors and poor quality health care had caused the untimely deaths of a number of patients. In that regard, she wished to know whether Kyrgyzstan had an effective monitoring and quality control system, how medical errors and cases of criminal negligence were dealt with, whether insurance policies provided compensation to patients who had suffered harm in such circumstances and how patients could seek redress for complications arising from their treatment.

41. **Mr. De Schutter** said that the rise in the child poverty rate since 2010 was of great concern. The monthly allowance only covered a very small proportion of low-income families with children and thus was not an effective remedial measure. The Committee was also concerned that children were increasingly being institutionalized simply because their families were poor. Furthermore, reports suggested that conditions in the institutions were substandard, particularly when it came to nutrition. He wished to know what action the State party had taken or envisaged taking in terms of monitoring them and implementing the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to improve support for the poorest families and ensure that institutionalization was a measure of truly last resort.

42. Food security was a major problem in the State party, as were the worryingly high levels of childhood malnutrition and stunted growth. The budget allocated to the school feeding programme was approximately \$10 per child, which was decidedly low. Further information on how the programme for food security and nutrition (2015–2017) would tackle the issue, and the resources allocated thereto, would therefore be appreciated. Lastly, the number of school dropouts had continued to rise and poverty was considered to be the major determining factor behind adolescents leaving school early to enter the labour market. Information on the steps being taken to remedy the problem should be provided.

43. **Ms. Shin** said that she welcomed the increase in the maximum term of imprisonment for bride kidnapping from 3 years to 7 years. The practice was, however, still widespread and she wished to know how the law was being enforced and how many people had been arrested and prosecuted in recent years. On the issue of domestic violence, it seemed that cases where no serious bodily harm had been caused were not considered to be criminal offences. She stressed that all cases of domestic violence, regardless of the perceived level of bodily harm inflicted, should be made criminal offences and asked whether the Government planned to review the legislation. She also wished to know whether the definition of the family included live-in partners, former spouses and the families of spouses or partners. As restraining orders were only rarely issued, she would like to know what action had been taken to train law enforcement officials and the judiciary. She would also welcome information on the number of shelters for victims of domestic violence, whether they differed from the communal prevention centres, whether they were run by the State or NGOs and how much funding was available for them.

44. **Mr. Uprimny Yepes** said that it was essential that the legal safeguards governing forced evictions should be aligned with international standards, particularly for vulnerable groups or people living below the poverty threshold, with consideration given to the needs of ethnic minorities, notably the Uzbeks in Osh who had been forcibly evicted from their homes following the ethnic tensions in 2010. Details on specific measures taken to establish appropriate legislation and policies that were compliant with international standards would be welcomed. Disaggregated statistical data on communities that were particularly badly

affected by poverty should also be provided. Since the ethnic tensions in 2010, a number of colleges which had provided teaching in the Uzbek language had closed, while the Uzbek population in the areas concerned had remained more or less stable. Information on why and when the closures had occurred should be provided.

45. He said that the maternal mortality rate was still very high and he wondered what steps the State party intended to take to finally bring about a reduction, given that the strategies employed over the last 10 years had had little effect. There seemed to be a clear link between the dramatic increase in the use of psychoactive substances, such as heroin, and the escalation in the HIV/AIDS and hepatitis B infection rates. He wished to know whether the Government had introduced or envisaged any initiatives, such as providing sterile needles and syringes, to reduce the rates of infection.

46. **Mr. Martynov** said that he wished to know what factors had been attributed to the sharp increase in the poverty rate between 2009 and 2013 and what the figure was for 2014.

47. **Mr. Kedzia** said that further clarification was needed of the steep rise in the maternal mortality rate between 2013 and 2014 and the measures taken to remedy the situation. He would welcome information on the hepatitis C prevalence rate and whether the Government was assessing the feasibility of offering the latest effective, albeit quite expensive, treatment for the disease.

48. **Mr. Kerdoun** said that he would like additional information on the root causes of absenteeism and the high dropout rate in schools and the steps taken to address them. While the State party had said that the high rate of poverty was a factor, it had not explained what action it was taking to tackle the problem and to improve school infrastructure and quality. He would also like an update on the national programme on the development of the State language and improvement of the language policy in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2014–2020, further information on the impact of the ethnic troubles in 2010 and the linguistic and other challenges faced by the Uzbek communities and, in particular, Uzbek journalists.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.