



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Distr.: General
10 July 2023

Original: English

Human Rights Committee 138th session

Summary record of the 3999th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 28 June 2023, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Abdo Rocholl

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

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

Fifth periodic report of Cyprus (CCPR/C/CYP/5; CCPR/C/CYP/QPR/5)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Cyprus joined the meeting.*
2. **Ms. Christodoulidou-Zannetou** (Cyprus) said that following the presidential election of February 2023, women now occupied 11 out of 25 seats on the Council of Ministers, and the first female President of the Supreme Court and Speaker of the House of Representatives had been elected during the reporting period. The Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights had been strengthened and, in October 2022, had been accredited with A status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions for its full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). A human rights unit had been established in the Ministry of Justice and Public Order in 2019 to monitor the human rights situation in Cyprus and the country's compliance with its human rights obligations, and the first National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights had been adopted in 2021.
3. Under the Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, a coordinating body had been established to draft a national strategy to prevent and combat violence against women and a corresponding action plan for the period 2023–2028. A government-subsidized service providing multidisciplinary support to female victims of sexual and gender-based violence and their families had opened in 2020. Laws had also been enacted to combat sexism in all its forms, to ensure protection from harassment and stalking, and to guarantee holistic sex education for children in primary and secondary schools. There had been a number of programmes to raise awareness of issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons. A bill was before parliament to allow self-determination of legal gender without the need for a medical opinion and, in May 2023, conversion therapies designed to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity or expression had been criminalized. In 2021, media service providers had been legally prohibited from broadcasting material that constituted incitement to hatred or violence against any person or group; they were also required to make their services accessible to people with disabilities. A strategic plan had been adopted for the period 2023–2025 to ensure that educational policies were based on equality, inclusiveness, creativity and innovation.
4. Pursuant to a 2023 decision of the Council of Ministers, all ministries and deputy ministries were required to appoint a focal point for the implementation of equality policies in the public sector and actions to raise public awareness of gender equality. The gender pay gap had decreased from 11.2 per cent in 2017 to 9.7 per cent. Legislation had been adopted in 2022 to promote a work-life balance for working parents and carers; it provided for a parental leave allowance, leave for carers, and flexible working arrangements for working parents and carers. The period during which maternity benefit would be paid had been increased for second or subsequent births, adoption or surrogate births, and paternity benefit was now available to all fathers regardless of marital status and could be increased in the case of the mother's death. Employers were now obliged to prepare a code of conduct to prevent gender-based or sexual harassment in the workplace.
5. The Government of Cyprus monitored, supported and protected victims of trafficking during court procedures and covered all their needs and expenses. An online platform for reporting trafficking in persons had been established by the Cyprus Police in January 2022 and a National Action Plan for 2023–2026 was due to be adopted shortly. A criminal justice system adapted for children in conflict with the law was due to be established pursuant to a law dated April 2021. Conditions of detention had been improved across all detention centres, including at the Menogeia detention centre for migrants in an irregular situation. A bill to amend the Refugee Law was being drafted to incorporate recent jurisprudence, to transpose new European Union directives and to clarify the provisions on procedure. The National Roma Strategic Framework, which had been submitted to the European Commission in December 2021, established the social inclusion priorities of Cyprus for the period 2021–

2030, outlined the programmes to be drawn up by the competent authorities and set national goals and measures for enhancing equality, inclusion and participation for Roma persons living under the jurisdiction of Cyprus.

6. **Ms. Kran** said that she wished to know what procedures were in place to assist complainants, particularly those without access to a lawyer, in pursuing remedies for violations of their rights under the first Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. What was the Government doing to raise public awareness of the Optional Protocol? She wondered how information on human rights and the Covenant was shared within the educational system, whether information on human rights was accessible in the Greek, Turkish and minority languages, and whether grants or training were provided to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) so that they could support victims of human rights violations. She wished to know why there had been a delay in ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and whether there were plans to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and to sign and ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. She wondered whether international human rights law had been invoked in any recent court judgments and what steps had been taken to increase awareness of the Covenant among members of the legal profession, the prosecution service and the judiciary.

7. She would appreciate an update on the cases of missing persons since the most recent report of the Committee on Missing Persons in 2022. She wondered if the Committee was provided with adequate resources, training and personnel; whether the State party intended to grant the Committee access to the northern part of the island and to all military archives containing information on sites there to help it in its investigations; and what measures had been taken to promote transparency in those investigations. She wished to know what steps had been taken to investigate, prosecute and punish individuals responsible for enforced disappearances in Cyprus and whether there were plans to define enforced disappearance as a criminal offence. What steps had been taken to establish a truth and reconciliation commission to clarify the circumstances under which persons had gone missing during conflict in 1963–1964 and in 1974? And what systems were in place to create a national reparations programme for victims of human rights violations, including enforced disappearance?

8. **Mr. Teraya** said that he wished to know what the impact had been of the reports and opinions published by the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights, including on government policy, court rulings and legislative amendments. He would like to know what role the Commissioner had in the selection of staff, what level of importance was accorded to the Commissioner's recommendations, whether the procedure to appoint a Commissioner allowed for the independence required by the Paris Principles, and how that independence was guaranteed should the political situation change. He also wished to know what steps were planned to allow the Office of the Commissioner to hire Turkish Cypriot staff; how sufficient funds were guaranteed to ensure the Commissioner's mandate could be fulfilled; when the Human Rights Advisory Committee would be established; and whether the Committee's work would be in line with the Paris Principles.

9. He wished to know how article 7 (3) of the Constitution, which allowed for the use of deadly force in certain circumstances, was compatible with article 6 (1) of the Covenant, the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the United Nations Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement. He wondered what measures were in place to prevent the arbitrary implementation of article 7 (3) so as to ensure compliance with international standards on the use of force in law enforcement and to prevent the arbitrary deprivation of life and disproportionate use of force. He wished to know whether draft legislation that would allow the use of Tasers by the Cyprus Police would ensure they were used only when necessary and in accordance with international standards.

10. **Mr. Helfer** said that he wished to know what steps would be taken to promptly process applications for citizenship from persons protected under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and to ensure that applicants were notified of any decision taken and

that the legal criteria for obtaining citizenship were applied without discrimination. He wondered what criteria were used to deny or delay applications for citizenship for children born in Cyprus to one Cypriot parent and one non-Cypriot parent who had entered or remained in the country illegally, and what steps would be taken to reduce such delays. He wished to know what measures the State party would take to avoid statelessness in cases where a third-country parent could not confer their own nationality on a child born in Cyprus. He would also like to know if Cyprus intended to ratify any of the four core conventions on statelessness.

11. He would like to know what measures were being taken to ensure that national anti-discrimination laws were enforced effectively; to hold the individuals responsible for hate crimes accountable; to investigate complaints of hate crimes independently and impartially; to provide reparations to victims; and to encourage the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights to impose fines or other serious penalties in cases of discrimination. He also wished to know what measures were being taken to implement the Code of Conduct against Racism and Guide for Managing and Recording Racist Incidents in all schools. What was the Government doing to improve the reporting of racist and homophobic incidents and to hold accountable administrators and teachers who did not follow the Code? He would appreciate an update on the proposed action plan to combat discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, age, disability, ethnicity and religion. He wished to know more about the functions of the Anti-Discrimination Body and the Equality Authority, their latest activities and how their mandates related to the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights.

12. While the ambitious scope of the State party's national action plan on gender equality was commendable, he would be grateful to receive up-to-date information on the plan's outcomes, including information on specific laws and policies designed to improve the representation of women in leadership positions in the private sector. As to the public sector, he would appreciate it if the delegation could describe the barriers encountered by women, who remained underrepresented in senior political positions, and the State party's plans for breaking down those barriers. The delegation might also like to comment on reports that women were discouraged from participating more actively in political life by sexist and patriarchal attitudes. In addition, information on any specific measures to be adopted by the State party to ensure the equal and meaningful participation of women in the peace process would be welcome. Lastly, noting the disproportionately high rate of unemployment among women and the persistence of discrimination against mothers and pregnant women in the labour market, he would like to know if any specific measures had been taken by the State party to address gender inequality in the workplace.

13. **Mr. El Haiba** said that he would be grateful if the delegation could clarify whether, following the State party's amendments to its legislation, the children of women who had been internally displaced now had the same rights – in particular the right to vote – as the children of men who had been internally displaced. In the light of reports of discrimination and racism against the children of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants within the health-care and social services, he would also be grateful to hear about any measures in place to address such discrimination and to ensure that all children, regardless of the nationality or legal status of their parents, had access to health care and social services.

14. He was concerned by reports of the refoulement of asylum-seekers attempting to cross the Green Line, and would appreciate more information on the State party's policies and procedures in that regard, as well as on any measures in place to ensure that all asylum-seekers had the opportunity to submit a claim upon entry into Cyprus. He also wished to know more about the national action plan on migration management adopted in 2020. In particular, he wished to know how it aligned with the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Information about current and future measures to ensure that the principle of non-refoulement was fully respected in practice would be greatly appreciated. Lastly, he wished to know what protections existed for children at risk of refoulement, particularly those who were migrants but were not considered eligible for official asylum procedures and those who were not covered by the legislation protecting child victims of human trafficking.

15. **Ms. Šurlan** said that she was appreciative of the State party's efforts to raise awareness about domestic violence, but would like to have statistical data on the number of incidents of gender-based violence reported and the proportion of reported incidents that had led to a prosecution. She would also be interested to know more about how the State party was addressing the root causes of the low rates of prosecution and conviction for domestic violence; how it was improving reporting, empowering women and combating gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes; and what steps it had taken to develop new laws, protocols and action plans, to cooperate with NGOs and to conduct awareness-raising campaigns. Noting the reference in the State party's fifth periodic report to the "Women's House" and "Children's House" services, she would be interested to learn more about the forms of support and protection they offered to victims of domestic violence. Did the delegation think that those services offered sufficient coverage in both urban and rural areas? Commending the State party's efforts to provide training on domestic violence and violence against women for police officers, she wondered whether such training was also provided for judges and prosecutors, whether the training was mandatory for judges and prosecutors working on cases of domestic violence or violence against women, and whether it included guidance on how to contribute to the elimination of gender stereotyping and prejudice. Lastly, she wished to know more about the law enacting the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention). In particular, was its application coordinated with that of the Law on Violence in the Family?

16. The statistical data in the State party's report on the prosecution of police officers for torture or ill-treatment was welcome, but she wondered whether updated information was available on the 82 cases listed as "pending investigation" in the State party's report and the cases listed as "before court" in the annex thereto. In addition, she wished to know the number of complaints made by inmates that had been submitted to the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights or to the Independent Authority for the Investigation of Allegations and Complaints against the Police instead of to the Prisons Department, and whether there had been any cases where the findings of those two bodies had been different from those of the Prisons Department. She also wished to know whether the reported understaffing of the Independent Authority had been resolved, and, if so, how. She would like the delegation to provide more information on the measures in place for preventing abuse and ill-treatment by law enforcement officials, as well as measures for providing reparations to victims, including details of cases where reparations had been provided.

17. Regarding trafficking in human beings, she wished to have more information on the assistance and reparations provided to victims. Were victims directed towards the civil courts to claim compensation, or did they receive support to claim compensation in criminal proceedings? Could the delegation clarify whether article 62 of the Law on the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking and Exploitation of Persons and the Protection of Victims had been implemented and, in particular, whether a victim support fund had been established? She would be interested to learn more about the role of the Social Welfare Services in the context of the National Referral Mechanism. She would like to know how victims and potential victims were identified, whether a "certificate of identification" enabled victims to file a complaint and whether victims who did not have such a certificate were able to file a complaint. More detailed information about the accommodation made available for male victims of trafficking, including how it compared with that provided for female victims, would be welcome, as would more information about the services in place to assist child victims of trafficking. She wished to know more about efforts to promote the social inclusion of victims, including foreign nationals and asylum-seekers, protect them from revictimization and empower them by facilitating their access to the labour market, vocational training and education. Lastly, she wished to know more about targeted training for officers of the judiciary, including whether training in handling trafficking cases was mandatory, what the procedure was for selecting judges and prosecutors to participate in such training, and whether lawyers representing victims of trafficking received special training.

The meeting was suspended at 4 p.m. and resumed at 4.20 p.m.

18. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the ratification of the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the International Convention for the Protection of All

Persons from Enforced Disappearance remained under scrutiny by the relevant authorities. Her Government intended to seek technical assistance from the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances with a view to establishing enforced disappearance as a criminal offence and advancing the process of ratification. As for an update on the number of missing persons found, the numbers had risen slightly since mid-2022: the remains of 738 Greek Cypriots and 292 Turkish Cypriots who had disappeared had now been found. Finding missing persons was becoming increasingly difficult owing to the diminishing number of living witnesses and the construction of buildings on possible burial sites. Another obstacle was the reluctance of the Turkish authorities to release information on missing persons and on the mass burials of Greek Cypriots by the Turkish army. The Turkish authorities were also reluctant to allow unimpeded access to military zones for the purposes of investigation and excavation. Her own Government did not impede access to military sites, as was evident from the report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances on its visit to Cyprus in 2022.

19. With regard to ensuring accountability for enforced disappearances, she said that the Committee on Missing Persons did not investigate the cause of death of missing persons, which was beyond its mandate, but a dedicated police unit had been set up to investigate cases of missing persons. Three cases of investigations into Turkish-Cypriot missing persons had been brought before the European Court of Human Rights amid claims by relatives of the missing persons that the investigations had lacked effectiveness, impartiality, independence and transparency. The Court had not found against Cyprus on any of those counts. The primary obstacle to convictions remained the lack of evidence.

20. Her Government currently had no plans to establish a truth and reconciliation commission. It also had no national reparations programme for victims of enforced disappearance but did have allowances for the relatives of missing persons. Türkiye was yet to pay reparations to victims.

21. **A representative of Cyprus** said that, since the establishment in 2010 of a special police unit to investigate cases of missing persons, investigations had been opened into 44 cases involving 121 Turkish Cypriots. No prosecutions had yet been brought, and all the cases remained open. Major obstacles to bringing cases to trial included a lack of eyewitnesses or, where an eyewitness was found, the witness's reluctance to make a written statement.

22. The law enacting the provisions of the Istanbul Convention provided for the establishment of a national coordinating body for preventing and combating violence against women, which had been duly established in March 2022. The national coordinating body, headed by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order and open to the participation of NGOs, was responsible for coordinating, planning, implementing, monitoring and assessing all policies and measures intended to prevent and combat all forms of violence addressed in the Istanbul Convention. The national coordinating body had co-organized a round-table discussion with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the topic of protecting women refugees and asylum-seekers from gender-based violence. A five-year national strategy approved by the Council of Ministers in February 2023 included targeted action to support victims of violence, prosecute perpetrators and raise awareness among communities and vulnerable groups, including women with disabilities, about gender-based violence and its effects.

23. Specialized training was available for all professionals working with the victims of violent crimes. Plans were in place to establish a unified database into which all competent authorities working on the protection of victims of violent crimes could input relevant information. Training programmes could subsequently be developed on the basis of that information. As far as the police were concerned, a new unit dedicated to education and awareness-raising had been set up, and a new programme at the Cyprus Police Academy included lectures about vulnerable victims.

24. Since the establishment in 2020 of a new police subdirectorates for safeguarding, which was responsible for coordinating all newly established units addressing domestic violence and child abuse across Cyprus, reports of domestic violence had increased by 40 per cent. The number of cases of child abuse and domestic violence had risen from 1,298 in 2019

to 2,032 in 2020 and 3,562 in 2021. Women and girls represented 75 per cent of victims. The police had increased the number of restraining orders issued to protect victims of domestic violence, and victims were transferred to a shelter when their life was considered to be in danger. As part of additional efforts to protect victims, the police had established new protocols to ensure the prompt and thorough investigation of crimes of violence, including rape; it had also signed a memorandum of understanding with 20 NGOs regarding the protection of vulnerable victims and groups, and it conducted awareness-raising campaigns three or four times a year.

25. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the three shelters in the country provided 17 rooms for victims of violence and their families, with each room housing up to four persons, usually one or more women with their children. Although in receipt of Government funding, the shelters were operated by the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence, which could also house victims in rented accommodation if necessary. In the shelters, victims were provided with, among other services, counselling and assistance with their reintegration into society and the labour market. With shelters in Nicosia and Limassol, the two largest cities in Cyprus were covered; if necessary, the authorities would consider establishing others.

26. In the Women's House and the Children's House, victims of violence or of sexual abuse and exploitation, respectively, were provided with social, health-care, mental health and other services, all under one roof. The Women's House was operated by the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence and the Children's House was run by the NGO Hope for Children. Both Houses were fully Government-funded and the expansion of the Children's House was currently under consideration. In 2022, 395 cases had been referred to the Women's House and 437 had been referred to the Children's House.

27. **A representative of Cyprus** said that all cases of child sexual abuse investigated by the Cyprus Police were referred to the Children's House, where police officers worked with psychologists and social workers. Provided they agreed, women victims of violence were referred to the Women's House. In both instances, protocols were in place to receive the woman or child, and the multidisciplinary team at the House in question held weekly meetings on each case.

28. Overlaps existed between the Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of 2021 and the Law on Violence in the Family of 2000; for instance, psychological violence was covered by both. Therefore, suspects were always charged under both laws.

29. **A representative of Cyprus** said that, since international human rights instruments were enshrined in the Constitution, the Ministry of the Interior took account of a broad spectrum of human rights when formulating decisions, policies, measures and legislation in relation to migration and asylum. The country's migration policy included the strengthening of infrastructure, the prompt examination of applications for international protection and the acceleration of return procedures for those without the right to remain. Since at least 2018, Cyprus had been the European Union member State with the largest number of applications for international protection, putting unprecedented pressure on its asylum reception procedures and integration system; from 2015 to May 2023, nearly 78,000 applications for asylum had been submitted. As at June 2023, applicants for, and beneficiaries of, international protection represented 6 per cent of the national population, with over 21,500 new applications in 2022 alone, from nationals of countries such as Syria, Nigeria and Afghanistan.

30. In February 2022, her Government and the European Commission had established a joint action plan on migration management. The plan focused on identifying the places of origin of migratory flows, bolstering Cypriot reception and management structures and strengthening return procedures. The plan's objectives included improving conditions in all reception centres and enhancing procedures for the swift, fair and efficient processing and examination of asylum applications.

31. The Pournara reception centre, which was jointly funded by the Government and the European Union, housed all migrants until completion of the identification process and the initial procedures in their applications for international protection. Initially designed to hold

500 persons and later upgraded to house 1,000, it had been required to host approximately 3,200 individuals in March 2022; that overcrowding had contributed to significant operational problems. As at June 2023, the centre housed 1,400 persons. A reception and accommodation centre existed in Kofinou and, in 2021, a State-funded temporary reception centre had been established in Limnes. All three centres had been upgraded and a pre-departure centre was scheduled for completion in 2025. Operating the centres occupied a large proportion of the staff of the Asylum Service.

32. The Ministry of the Interior had secured the amendment of several laws, and even the Constitution, in order to clearly distinguish between the normal and accelerated asylum application procedures and to process both types of application more swiftly. In addition, the Asylum Service had expanded the national list of safe countries of origin to 27. The staff of the Administrative Court for International Protection and the Asylum Service had been reinforced. In addition, measures that included physical barriers and additional surveillance were in place on the Green Line, which was neither a border nor a transit zone. Under the Green Line Regulation, the Government did not allow the regularization of the migration status of persons who crossed the Green Line anywhere other than at one of the six official crossing points.

33. The Ministry had secured the amendment of laws on trafficking in persons, to incorporate a victim-centred approach and more stringent penalties for all offences. Awareness-raising campaigns on new trafficking-related offences and on victims' rights had been conducted. Also, the Ministry was committed to the early identification of vulnerable asylum-seekers, including victims of human trafficking, torture or any form of psychological, physical or sexual violence.

34. The Ministry, in partnership with the Press and Information Office, was planning an information campaign to deter potential migrants from sub-Saharan Africa by presenting them with the realities of the situation and the dangers of illegal migration. Nevertheless, the Government did not engage in pushbacks. Vessels found to be irregularly carrying migrants were checked by the Cyprus Port and Marine Police. If the vessel was at risk of sinking, a search and rescue operation was launched; otherwise, the migrants were taken to the nearest port and provided with assistance, including humanitarian aid and social welfare services. At the same time, the migrants were questioned, with a view to identifying the people-smugglers. Over 12,300 migrants had arrived in Cyprus irregularly in 2021, over 17,400 in 2022 and over 4,700 in the first half of 2023; each year, less than 10 per cent had arrived by sea. As at June 2023, 29 per cent of total annual arrivals were returned to their country of origin.

35. National policy on the return of non-European Union citizens was based on the European Union acquis; returns to the country of origin were in line with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, where relevant. Return decisions were made on a case-by-case basis and were based on objective criteria. Since the best interests of the child were a primary consideration, minors were never detained; nor were single parents of a minor. In the case of whole families, the mother was never detained. A detention order could be challenged under article 146 of the Constitution before the Administrative Court for International Protection. In the event of a violation of the non-refoulement principle, a deportation order could be suspended by means of a habeas corpus petition.

36. **A representative of Cyprus** said that human rights formed part of the compulsory health education curriculum, in which teachers, pupils and parents were encouraged to collaborate and promote social measures that facilitated healthy choices, including intercultural dialogue. The central goal was to give pupils and schools agency to address discrimination through the exercise of critical thinking. Diversity, interculturalism and human rights were separate subjects in the health education curriculum. By the end of the course, pupils were expected to be able to suggest and manifest behaviours that demonstrated respect for other pupils' rights, describe the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and propose or take action to defend the rights of the child in school or in the wider community. The Pedagogical Institute regularly organized in-service training for teachers of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

37. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth was taking a number of measures to address the challenges of implementing the Code of Conduct against Racism and Guide for Managing and Recording Racist Incidents. More schools were being encouraged to support the implementation of an anti-racist policy, including through training and meetings at which school representatives could exchange experiences and reflect on ways to deal with racist behaviour by colleagues, pupils and parents. Training would be available for headteachers and inspectors to ensure that schools identified and reported racist incidents. The anti-racist policy had been incorporated into all the Ministry's media, including its website, its support helpline and the parent information leaflets distributed in schools, which were available in Greek, English, Arabic, Turkish, Russian, Romanian and Bulgarian.

38. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the Human Rights Unit of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, working with the Attorney General's Office and the University of Cyprus, had drawn up the first National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights. In February 2022, a memorandum of cooperation had been signed with the Government of the United Kingdom on joint initiatives to protect LGBTI+ persons. The Unit had finalized the bill on the legal recognition of gender identity, which was before the House of Representatives. In addition, the Unit was preparing legislation intended to protect juveniles in conflict with the law.

39. **Mr. Carazo** asked whether the delegation could provide an explanation for the absence of representatives of civil society organizations at the current meeting, even though they had played a major role in the preparation of the report.

40. **Mr. Helfer** said that he would welcome responses to the questions he had raised regarding citizenship, accountability for hate crimes, the proposed national action plan to combat discrimination, the Anti-Discrimination Body and the Equality Authority.

41. **Ms. Kran** said that she would also appreciate responses to her question regarding the small number of communications submitted under the first Optional Protocol to the Covenant and procedures to assist complainants, and to her question regarding cases in which international human rights law had been invoked in domestic courts.

42. **Ms. Šurlan** welcomed the fact that training courses on the subject of domestic violence were provided at the Cyprus Police Academy. However, she wished to know whether training was also provided for judges and prosecutors with a view to ensuring that the legislation governing domestic and gender-based violence was correctly interpreted.

43. Noting that men were placed in rented accommodation rather than in shelters, she asked whether they were provided with assistance and support there. She also wished to know whether victims of domestic and gender-based violence were required to follow a specific procedure in order to acquire the status of victims and obtain access to a shelter.

44. Noting that the definition of femicide had been incorporated into a law enacted in 2022, she asked why it had not been incorporated into the Criminal Code and whether femicide was addressed in a different manner in criminal proceedings.

45. **Mr. El Haiba** said that he would welcome additional information regarding the status of the Green Line. The Committee had been informed, for example, that transit procedures were facilitated by smugglers, including for unaccompanied minors.

46. He wished to know why the truth and reconciliation commission had not yet been established. He would also appreciate further information on the compensation programmes.

47. **Mr. Teraya** said that he would welcome responses to the questions he had asked concerning the Office of the Commission for Administration and Human Rights and the compliance of certain provisions of the Constitution, such as article 7 (3), with international norms.

48. **Ms. Bassim** said that the Committee had been informed that the shelters for women victims of violence were overcrowded and failed to meet the needs of marginalized and disadvantaged groups. She would therefore like to hear about national plans to cater for such needs. She wished to know whether the State party had adopted a national plan to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security,

particularly to promote the involvement of women in peace talks and in action pertaining to the security of refugees, displaced persons and other groups.

49. **Ms. Christodoulidou-Zannetou** (Cyprus) said that the procedure for appointing the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights had been established by Council of Ministers Decision No. 93.298 of June 2022. All candidates were evaluated by the Council of Ministers and the leading candidate must be approved by a majority of the House of Representatives and the President of the Republic. The former Commissioner had been appointed for another six-year term in early 2023. Pursuant to a recent amendment to the procedures for appointing staff to the Office of the Commissioner, applicants were required to take special examinations organized by the Office. The final selection would be made by the Public Service Commission from among applicants who had passed the examination, following consultations with the Commissioner.

50. With regard to the harmonization of the 2021 Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the 2020 Law on Violence in the Family, the Office of the Law Commissioner and the Ministry of Justice and Public Order were currently taking steps to amend and align the two laws.

51. **A representative of Cyprus** said that male victims of domestic violence, who were accommodated in a rented house or apartment, were provided with the same services as women victims. Victims who wished to enter a shelter were required to file a complaint with the police, who undertook a risk assessment and informed the social welfare services and the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence of the outcome. In cases of overcrowding in the shelters, the Association could rent houses or apartments for victims, where they would receive all necessary services.

52. **A representative of Cyprus** said that training on the issue of domestic violence in the Cyprus Police Academy was mandatory for all police recruits. In addition, police recruits attended the University of Cyprus for a semester and one of their five modules concerned human rights. Information on training for judges and prosecutors would be provided in due course.

53. When a victim of domestic violence was perceived to be at risk and the circumstances prevented the issuance of an immediate restraining order, the social welfare authorities were notified and the persons at risk were transferred to shelters or to rented rooms or apartments.

54. **A representative of Cyprus** said that, according to the 2022 Labour Force Survey, the employment rate for women was 72.1 per cent and that for men was 84.2 per cent. The widest employment gap had been recorded for persons in the 54 to 64 age group and the narrowest gap for persons in the 20 to 24 age group. The measures taken to promote equal pay would help to eliminate gender-based wage gaps and promote fairness in the workplace.

55. Investigations of businesses during the period up to 2021 had not revealed any gender-related discrimination in terms of pay. Inspections since 2022 had targeted specific sectors of the economy in which the pay gap appeared to be the highest. It had been found that occupational segregation and the low proportion of management positions held by women were the main contributors to the gender pay gap. Following inspections, employers tended to review their hiring and promotion policies in order to ensure that there were no impediments to the equal representation of men and women in the workforce. The possibility of introducing new legislation to promote pay transparency with a view to promoting equal pay for work of equal value was currently being considered.

56. Flexible work arrangements, including remote work options, could help women to balance their professional and personal responsibilities. The Ministry of Labour would be tabling a bill on telework within the next few months. Importance was also attached to paid maternity and parental leave so that women's job security and financial stability were not placed at risk by childbirth.

57. The elimination of workplace discrimination was of paramount importance and Cyprus intended to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) as soon as possible.

58. The Committee for Gender Equality in Employment and Vocational Education provided policy and legal advice to the Minister of Labour and monitored the implementation of the Law on Equal Treatment between Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training. The Committee submitted or received complaints of gender discrimination, and raised awareness among employers and employees of gender equality legislation, especially on the protection of women during pregnancy and the prevention of sexual harassment. The Committee also cooperated with the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute and the country's universities in raising awareness of the principle of equality in the workplace.

59. The Entrepreneurship Support Plan focused on specific population groups such as young people and women, and aligned its actions with European Union enterprise and industry policies. There was also a scheme aimed at providing flexible employment arrangements for women. New legislation and employment schemes would facilitate the employment of women who had been inactive due to childcare responsibilities. The schemes would be launched in 2024 following the adoption of the new legal framework on telework.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.