



# International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Distr.: General  
18 August 2015

Original: English

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## Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Eighty-seventh session

### Summary record of the 2366th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 12 August 2015, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. Calí Tzay

*later:* Mr. Amir (Vice-Chairperson)

*later:* Mr. Calí Tzay

## Contents

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

*Combined eighth to tenth periodic reports of the former Yugoslav Republic of  
Macedonia (continued)*

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

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

*Combined eight to tenth periodic reports of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (continued) (CERD/C/MKD/8-10, CERD/C/MKD/Q/8-10)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Kuzmanovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), replying to questions and comments from Committee members at the previous meeting, said that her country's greatest accomplishment in regard to the implementation of the Convention had been the adoption, in 2010, of the Law on the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination and, in 2014, of the Law Amending and Supplementing the Criminal Code, which expanded the prohibited grounds for discrimination. Draft legislation had been prepared to amend the Law on the Ombudsman in order to strengthen the Ombudsman's role as a national preventive mechanism against torture, consolidate its mandate to promote and protect human rights, and guarantee its financial independence in accordance with the Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (Paris Principles).

3. A series of measures had been taken to improve the status of non-citizens, including material conditions and access to shelter. Under the amended Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection adopted in 2015, the time period for filing asylum applications had been extended to 72 hours, which had significantly reduced the number of registered cases of migrant smuggling.

4. In order to enhance inter-institutional coordination, the Government had established the Inter-Sectoral Human Rights Body, composed of secretaries of State from key ministries. That body took the lead in following up the recommendations of international human rights bodies and was competent to propose legislative amendments and awareness-raising activities in the field of human rights.

5. Her Government deeply deplored the loss of human lives in the clashes that had taken place between an armed group and security forces in the northern town of Kumanovo in May 2015. The armed group had had no support from the local population or any political party. Proceedings were under way in the Public Prosecutor's Office.

6. **Mr. Chupi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that there was no segregation of Roma children in education. Although the proportion of Roma pupils was high in municipalities with a predominantly Roma population, there were no schools exclusively for Roma children. In Bitola elementary school, a case which had been brought to the Committee's attention by the Ombudsman, only 58 per cent of students enrolled in the 2013/14 school year were Roma; the other students were non-Roma. The Government conducted awareness-raising activities in municipalities with large Roma populations to encourage non-Roma parents to send their children to the same school as Roma children. In order to prevent the risk of segregation in Šuto Orizari municipality, where Roma made up the majority of the population, a modern government-funded secondary school had been built. By ensuring high-quality teachers and curricula, the Government hoped to encourage enrolment of students who were not part of the Roma community. In order to facilitate the access of Roma pupils to quality secondary schools, affirmative action measures had been put in place. Accordingly, test score requirements for Roma applicants were 10 per cent lower than for other students in order to reduce performance-related barriers to access.

7. **Ms. Kamberi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the equal rights of Roma were recognized in the Constitution and Roma participated actively in the political life of the country. There was a Roma political party, a Roma member of Parliament and a Roma Minister without Portfolio who was also the National Coordinator for the Roma Decade and Strategy. The Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy, the mayor of Šuto Orizari and several directors of government institutions and state officials were also Roma. Roma officials with municipal councils acted as a link between the council and the Roma community.

8. In order to promote the inclusion of Roma in Macedonian society, the Government had adopted the National Strategy for the Roma and the 2005-2015 Decade of Roma Inclusion. A national action plan was currently being prepared for all priority areas of the National Strategy. The Decade of Roma Inclusion was due to end in September 2015 and the International Steering Committee was discussing options for extending it for another five years. The ministries involved in the implementation of the Decade and the National Strategy had been allocated special budgets for their action plans.

9. Under the Inclusion of Roma Children in Preschool Education project, Roma children were enrolled in preschool free of charge for a year before they started elementary school, to facilitate their integration; since its inception in 2006 some 2,500 Roma children had benefited from the project. There were no Roma-only classes. Roma children were in the same classes as non-Roma pupils and had teaching assistants assigned to them. As of May 2015, the teaching assistants, who had formerly been employed on a temporary basis, had been given permanent contracts. NGOs liaised between the Roma families and education institutions. The Ministry of Education and Science ran a project to provide scholarships and mentors to Roma pupils in secondary schools; some 650 Roma pupils benefited from the project each year.

10. In support of the implementation of the National Strategy for the Roma and the Decade for Roma Inclusion, Roma information centres had been set up in 14 municipalities with a predominantly Roma population. Their task was to improve and establish links between the Roma community and local government bodies, and to inform Roma about their rights. Free legal assistance programmes for Roma were being implemented in the eastern and central parts of the country. Approximately 150 Roma — representatives of NGOs, State officials and experts — had been trained as mediators to facilitate communication between national and local authorities and the Roma community.

11. Under the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy had implemented an Employment Action Plan, which involved, for example, training for staff of employment centres, training for unemployed Roma, and training in setting up a business. In addition, measures had been taken to improve the housing situation of Roma. Ten per cent of projected social housing would be assigned to Roma families.

12. The Ministry of Health ran a programme to train Roma health mediators in order to improve Roma's access to health care.

13. In order to deal with the issue of unregistered Roma, the Government had established a working group drawn from relevant ministries, Roma NGOs, Roma information centres, international organizations and the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association. The working group went into Roma settlements in order to identify unregistered persons, enquired about the reasons for their failure to register, and conducted government-funded DNA analyses to identify them. Of the 550 unregistered Roma identified by the working group, 120 cases had been resolved. In order to

address the problem from a legal point of view, proposals for amendments to family law and other relevant rules were being prepared. They were expected to be submitted by October 2015.

14. Effective measures were needed to tackle the growing problem of street children. Children frequently took to the street to escape neglect or abuse by their parents, but also many parents forced their children to beg. In order to protect children better from such abuse and neglect, the relevant provisions of the Law on the Family needed to be revised. The protocol for treatment of street children developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy sought to get children off the street and facilitate their social inclusion. Staff at social work centres and representatives of relevant local institutions had been briefed on that instrument.

15. There were some 130 internally displaced persons in the country. Prior to their displacement, they had lived in homes that they did not own. The homes had been destroyed and they had been unable to return. The Government paid the rent for the apartments in which they now lived, in Skopje and other cities; so far no complaints had been received about their living conditions.

16. Several measures had been taken to address the problem of early marriage in the Roma community. The Inclusion of Roma Children in Preschool Education project and the secondary school scholarship programme had undoubtedly helped reduce the number of early marriages. The Government was also implementing a conditional cash transfer project whereby social security beneficiaries received additional financial support for each child attending secondary school. That project, too, had helped curb early marriage, but the problem had not been eliminated altogether.

17. As to victims of domestic violence, they could seek refuge in shelters, whatever their age. The Government also operated shelters for victims of human trafficking, in cooperation with NGOs.

18. **Ms. Ivanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that an operational plan for implementation of the National Strategy on Equality and Non-Discrimination had been adopted. It specified the goals of the Strategy, short- and medium-term activities, implementing bodies and funding. It also provided for alignment of the existing legal framework with the Law on the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination, institutional capacity-building, improvement of inter-agency cooperation, access for rural women to primary health care, and the opening of gynaecological centres in municipalities with a predominantly Roma population. A national body tasked with implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had been established pursuant to the operational plan.

19. A report had been published on the implementation of the Law on the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy between June and November 2013. It identified areas requiring further action and assessed the effectiveness of the preventive mechanism in addressing complaints of discrimination. The report also reviewed the awareness-raising and other activities undertaken by the Commission for the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination in cooperation with the Ministry and partner organizations. An action plan for implementation of the Law had been adopted in light of the report. It contained clearly defined targets and indicators, an analysis of training requirements, and guidelines for the establishment of an effective knowledge-management system and for improvements in the Commission's rules of procedure and funding. The Law was to be amended with a view to establishing a special service for administrative and technical affairs in the Commission, specifying staff responsibilities and ensuring accountability.

20. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy had been implementing the action plan since 2013. It had held a number of coordinating sessions with national and international governmental and non-governmental organizations. As to the Commission, it had continued to promote confidence in its ability to identify cases of discrimination through campaigns, analysis and research. It was currently improving the procedures for dealing with complaints, which could now be submitted online. The Commission had signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the General Secretariat of the Government and, in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), had prepared basic guidelines on non-discrimination.

21. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy had implemented a training project, in cooperation with the British Council and the British Embassy, as part of the National Strategy. Forty two-day training courses had been organized in 2013 for representatives of State institutions at the central and local levels, the judiciary and civil society. Two sets of guidelines had been produced, translated into Albanian and distributed to all institutions.

22. In May 2015 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy had begun evaluating the National Strategy. The evaluation would be completed in September 2015 and its findings and recommendations would be applied during the period from 2016 to 2020.

23. **Ms. Stanchevska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Ministry of the Interior had conducted a police operation after the Kumanovo incidents on 9 and 10 May 2015 with a view to apprehending the perpetrators of criminal acts. Those arrested had been detained at police stations and the Ministry's Sector for Internal Control and Professional Standards had confirmed that the police officers had observed all relevant provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, such as the right to remain silent, to be informed of the reasons for one's arrest, to contact a person of one's choice and to undergo a medical examination. The time limits governing detention had also been observed. None of those arrested had complained of their treatment by the police. Injuries sustained during their arrest had been recorded in the files and assessed by the Sector for Internal Control and Professional Standards, which had concluded that the coercive means used were in line with the regulations governing police conduct and the Code of Criminal Procedure. No complaints had been filed with the Sector or the courts concerning abusive action by the police.

24. Vigorous measures to improve the conditions of administrative detention for illegal migrants at the Gazi Baba Reception Centre for Foreigners had been taken since the second half of 2014 with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Macedonian Red Cross. Medical professionals were present at all times, medical care was free of charge and the Centre was subjected to regular health inspections. In view of the number of illegal migrants requiring accommodation, the municipality of Gazi Baba had decided in March 2015 to use an additional building, located in Visbegovo, for the purpose. The building was reserved for people belonging to vulnerable groups. The Government had also made available a third building, which required renovation. As a result of increased cooperation with several institutions, ministries and the Macedonian Red Cross, the number of persons accommodated at the Reception Centre had dramatically declined.

25. Extended detention of migrants at the Gazi Baba Reception Centre for Foreigners had occurred most frequently when they were required to appear in court as witnesses to illegal migration or smuggling of migrants. However, following amendments to the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, the circumstances in which migration was deemed to be illegal had been reduced. As a result, there were currently no cases of extended detention.

26. Certificates concerning applications for asylum had been issued to a large number of foreigners. The vast majority were from the Syrian Arab Republic. As at 10 August 2015, applications had been granted to 31 Syrians (including 10 children), 3 Pakistanis, 2 Algerians, 2 Iraqis, 2 Moroccans and 1 Egyptian.

27. Some Macedonian nationals had been prohibited from leaving the country pursuant to article 15, paragraph 4, of the Law on the Crossing of the State Border and on Movement in the Border Area because they failed to meet the conditions for residence in a foreign country and were suspected of abusing the European Union visa liberalization regime.

28. In 2015 the Ombudsman had visited six police stations, six border crossings and the Reception Centre for Foreigners to ensure that the detention facilities complied with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. On receiving the Ombudsman's recommendations concerning the reconstruction of police stations and special detention facilities, the Ministry of the Interior had replied that the recommendations would be taken into account in line with relevant legislation and provided that the requisite funds were available.

29. The Sector for Internal Control and Professional Standards monitored the legality of the work of the Ministry of the Interior from within, while external oversight was exercised by the State party's National Assembly. The staff of the Sector had been increased from 40 to 60 with a view to enhancing its independence. In the first half of 2015, the Sector had brought 51 criminal charges against 74 employees of the Ministry.

30. The authorities had fully complied with the 2014 ruling of the Constitutional Court concerning the Law on Travel Documents of Citizens of Macedonia.

31. The Ministry of the Interior had recently taken vigorous action to promote a positive approach by the police to all members of the population without discrimination. Several projects were being implemented to improve confidence in the police among predominantly Roma communities. In 2014 the Ministry had highlighted the duty of police officers to respect the exercise of human rights and freedoms, and the Sector for Internal Control and Professional Standards had launched a campaign to promote public awareness of the procedures for filing complaints and protesting against ill-treatment by the police. The Ministry document had been translated into Albanian, Romani and Turkish and distributed to all police stations and border crossings.

32. A total of 1,255 police officers had attended human rights training courses by June 2015. They had been alerted, in particular, to the correct treatment of arrested, detained and convicted persons. The Academy for Training of Judges and Public Prosecutors had provided counselling on the burden of proof in discrimination cases. A training course on discrimination and hate speech for members of the Sector for Internal Control and Professional Standards was planned for September 2015.

33. **Mr. Stojkovski** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that free health care was provided for Roma children, regardless of whether they possessed an identity document. The relevant health-care services provided emergency care, whenever necessary, for migrants. Asylum seekers were provided with vaccines in accordance with the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO). Migrants could also be vaccinated on request.

34. **Mr. Kasumi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that a language was recognized as official if it was spoken by more than 20 per cent of the population.

Personal documents were then issued in the language, and it could be used in the Assembly and the judiciary.

35. **Ms. Ismani-Sakipi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the increased representation of ethnic communities in public administration had facilitated their participation in the formulation of public policies and decision-making. It had also built trust in existing institutions, especially the police, and reduced existing stereotypes.

36. The term “Albanian community” referred to persons who had left Albania or Kosovo and were now Macedonian citizens.

37. The ethnic composition of the police force was 76.7 per cent Macedonian, 19.57 per cent Albanian, 0.85 per cent Turkish, 1.61 per cent Serb, 0.1 per cent Vlach, 0.3 per cent Bosniak, 0.71 per cent Roma and 0.15 per cent other origin.

38. **Ms. Ilieva** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that, since the entry into force of the Law on the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination, the lower courts had handed down four judgements concerning claims of discrimination. In the first case, the court had ordered the defendant to ensure equal treatment for the claimant under the existing labour legislation and to pay compensation. In the second case, the court had found that the Ministry of the Interior had violated the right to equality by not allowing the claimant to cross the border; the Ministry had been ordered to pay damages. In the third case, the lower court judgement that the defendant had violated the right of a member of the Roma community to cross the border had been upheld by a court of appeal. In the fourth case, the court had ruled that the defendant was guilty of nonfeasance for failing to build an access ramp for persons with disabilities, and had ordered the defendant to pay damages.

39. The Constitutional Court had heard 27 cases concerning discrimination and freedom of expression in 2012. They had all been dismissed: 6 on the ground that no rights had been violated; 11 on the ground of lack of jurisdiction of the Court; 8 on the ground of lack of proof; and 2 on the ground of expiry of the statute of limitations. The Court had heard 13 cases concerning the same issues in 2013. Six had been dismissed on the ground of lack of jurisdiction of the Court and seven had been dismissed on procedural grounds. In 2014 the Court had heard 16 cases. Two had been dismissed on the ground that there had been no violation of the right to freedom of expression and 14 had been dismissed on the ground of lack of jurisdiction of the Court.

40. The bill to amend the Law on the Ombudsman would satisfy the requirements for A status accreditation. It would also improve the procedures for election to the post.

41. The Law on the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination stipulated that, in discrimination cases, the Law on Civil Procedure should apply and not the Criminal Code. In such cases, the burden of proof was firmly on the defendant.

42. Articles 13 to 15 of the Law on the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination provided for positive discrimination and the use of affirmative measures until full, effective equality was achieved. The provisions ensured equal opportunities for certain groups in society that would otherwise be unable to exercise their rights. They outlined the circumstances in which different treatment of persons was justified. The State party could provide a translation of those provisions upon request.

43. **Mr. Avtonomov** asked the State party to clarify its position on ratification of the amendment to article 8 of the Convention. He noted that article 11 of the Law on the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination permitted non-nationals to be

treated differently from nationals with respect to the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the Constitution, other domestic legislation and the international treaties to which the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was a party. Could the delegation explain in what circumstances different treatment was permitted?

44. **Mr. Vázquez** noted that some asylum seekers were being detained for long periods at the border while the authorities took down their testimony against human traffickers. Would the State party consider adopting measures to enable testimony to be taken without involving prolonged detention? He asked the delegation to comment on media reports of border police corruption, including reports that they demanded money from asylum seekers before issuing confirmation of intent to seek asylum. He was concerned that only one person had been granted refugee status in 2015.

45. He asked the delegation to confirm reports from civil society organizations that Roma students were being transferred to the new school in Šuto Orizari from other secondary schools in the area, which they considered to be an example of “positive segregation”. Did the State party embrace the term “positive segregation” and was it part of its policy for that particular school?

46. With regard to tackling the problem of Roma early marriages, he wondered whether the State party, in addition to introducing preschool education and scholarship programmes, planned to strengthen the provision of social services and expand health-care outreach and awareness-raising activities.

47. He asked whether the problem of drug addiction among Roma children, some of them as young as eight years old, had been properly recognized. Were measures being contemplated to provide health care and drug treatment centres for children under 16?

48. Despite the Constitutional Court having nullified certain legal restrictions on the right of persons to leave the country, the profiling of Roma at border crossings remained a problem. He asked the delegation to comment on a report by the Office of the Ombudsman that indicated that none of its recommendations on the issue had been accepted.

49. *Mr. Amir (Vice-Chairperson) took the Chair.*

50. **Mr. Chupi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that there was positive discrimination, but no positive segregation, in the education system. Roma students could choose to attend any school in the country; indeed, most Roma students in Šuto Orizari went to other schools in the region. One of the aims in building the new, state-of-the-art school in Šuto Orizari had been to attract both non-Roma and Roma students to the school as a way to encourage integration and combat stereotyping and prejudice.

51. **Mr. Stojkovski** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the number of young children addicted to drugs was low, but the Government took the problem very seriously. A high-level group of experts had drafted a protocol and clinical guidelines for the treatment of child drug addicts and children born to drug-addict mothers, as well as general clinical guidelines on administering medication to drug addicts, including children.

52. **Ms. Stanchevska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that all complaints of corruption brought against employees working for the Ministry of the Interior were recorded, with cases involving border crossing staff listed separately. She provided statistics on criminal charges such as corruption, abuse of authority, accepting bribes and falsifying official documents, filed against Ministry of the Interior border crossing staff between 2013 and 2015. The Sector for Internal Control and Professional Standards of the Ministry of the Interior acted on complaints



received from citizens, NGOs and lawyers, and carried out internal checks at border crossings in order to prevent abuses by employees.

53. The Ministry of the Interior continued to strengthen its cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsman, with priority given to improving implementation of the Ombudsman's recommendations and acting on complaints regarding discrimination brought by the Ombudsman. Every effort was made to comply within the deadlines set by the law.

54. *Mr. Cali Tzay resumed the Chair.*

55. **Mr. Lindgren Alves** (Country Rapporteur) asked whether the families that encouraged or forced their children to marry early were among those who had integrated into society and whether the country's civil law established a minimum age for marriage. Noting that some members of the delegation themselves did not have traditional Macedonian names, he wondered whether any of them belonged to minority groups.

56. **Mr. Murillo Martínez** said that the State party should include in its next periodic report information on political participation among minority groups and women as well as data on the prison population disaggregated by race and ethnicity.

57. **Ms. Kuzmanovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that representation of minorities was improving in parliament and at all levels of government and that her delegation could provide further statistical information in that regard.

58. **Ms. Kamberi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Roma in her country were not nomads. They were citizens, and identified as either Roma, Ashkalia or Egyptian. There was no Sinti population in the country. There were many Roma working in the public administration and in both national and local institutions. She herself was a member of the Roma community, and her delegation included another Rom and two ethnic Albanians.

59. The minimum age of marriage was 18, or 16 with parental consent. Several projects were under way to encourage Roma girls to stay in school, and more than half of the some 300 Roma currently studying at the country's universities were women. The number of Roma girls entering into early marriage was decreasing, though there were still isolated cases in which parents pushed their daughters into marriage despite risking a fine of about €1,000 for not sending them to secondary school.

60. **Ms. Crickley** asked whether there were any projects focusing on the economic and social rights of Roma women in their 30s and 40s who had married early and now wished to follow a different trajectory in life. While there might not be any official segregation in schools, she was concerned about de facto segregation and asked what was being done to raise awareness of racial discrimination and human rights issues in schools so as to create an environment of mutual respect.

61. With regard to the training provided to police officers, judges and other officials, she asked whether the outcome of that training was ever evaluated and whether it had any impact on the trainees' initial employment, career path or possibility of promotion.

62. The Inter-Sectoral Human Rights Body did not seem to fit the definition of a national human rights institution.

63. She requested disaggregated data on the situation of ethnic Albanians who were citizens of the State party as compared with those who had emigrated from Albania.

64. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked the delegation to provide statistics on the number of stateless children and their place of origin. He wished to know why the Roma were living in vulnerable situations in the State party. Referring to Mr. Lindgren Alves's question about the ethnic composition of the delegation, he asked how traditional Macedonian names were identified and whether such a distinction might lead to racial discrimination in the State party.

65. **Ms. Kuzmanovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Inter-Sectoral Human Rights Body was not intended to replace the Office of the Ombudsman, which served as the national human rights institution. While names did provide clues to a person's ethnic origins, no distinction was made between traditional and non-traditional Macedonian names.

66. **Mr. Kasumi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that parliament had created a committee on the political system and inter-ethnic relations to discuss issues affecting the various ethnic communities in the country and to make recommendations, which parliament was required to take into account.

67. **Ms. Kamberi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that Roma children were integrated into mainstream classrooms starting in kindergarten, a process that helped socialization and taught them from an early age that they were equal to other students. In 2004, her country had adopted a national action plan specifically for Roma women, which would be updated by the end of 2015. The Fifth International Conference of Roma Women would be held in Skopje in October 2015.

68. **Ms. Stanchevska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Police Training Centre of the Ministry of the Interior followed an annual training plan that defined certain goals and priorities. It provided basic training as well as in-service training for all police officers.

69. **Mr. Chupi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that children began primary school at 6 years of age and took 9 years to complete it. Secondary education had been mandatory since 2008. According to data from the previous school year, 79 per cent of Roma students who completed primary school continued to secondary school. More than half of the Roma students who went on to higher education were female, which indicated a positive change with regard to early marriage.

70. The State did not segregate students in school. There might be a few cases in which a school's population was dominated by one ethnic group, but that was due to the students' place of residence. Campaigns were being conducted to address that issue, for example by encouraging Roma parents to send their children to schools other than the one nearest their home.

71. **Ms. Kamberi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Roma were indeed the most vulnerable group in the country. Since 2005, however, budget allocations had been made specifically to address their needs, and many projects had been carried out to encourage their integration into society. Those efforts had yielded results, particularly with regard to education and representation within the civil service. There were still major challenges ahead, however, the greatest being to lift all Roma out of poverty.

72. **Mr. Lindgren Alves** thanked the delegation for its very precise answers and an enlightening dialogue. In his view, there were a great many positive aspects to the situation in the State party, and if the country continued along its current trajectory it could become an example for other countries in the region to follow.

73. **Ms. Kuzmanovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) expressed her delegation's appreciation for the Committee's interest and said that her Government had made every effort to submit a balanced report that reflected the real situation on the ground and addressed all the Committee's previous concluding observations and recommendations.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*