



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 2374th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 18 August 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Calí Tzay

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

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

Combined twenty-first and twenty-second periodic reports of Norway (continued) (CERD/C/NOR/21-22; CERD/C/NOR/Q/21-22)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Norway took places at the Committee table.*
2. **The Chairperson** invited the delegation of Norway to continue replying to the questions raised at the previous meeting.
3. **Ms. Horne** (Norway) said that 8,000 Syrian refugees would be resettled in Norway over the next three years and that her country's financial support for efforts in the region would be significantly increased.
4. Her Government shared the Committee's concerns about hate speech and had held a round-table conference against hate speech in November 2014. The conclusion drawn at that conference was that more knowledge and research on hate speech were needed, along with focused work in educational institutions and campaigns to actively shape public attitudes. Many activities were already under way in that regard. A working group involving several ministries had been established, and the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion was conducting a review of all existing measures and research on hate speech.
5. The Action Plan against Radicalization and Violent Extremism had been launched in June 2014 and comprised 30 measures, several of which were aimed at preventing hate speech on the Internet. Police presence on the Internet would be strengthened, and the Government had allocated financial support to the "No Hate Speech" campaign, which was part of a larger campaign coordinated by the Council of Europe.
6. The Action Plan Against Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and Severe Restrictions on Young People's Freedom comprised 22 measures aimed at strengthening preventive efforts in schools and improving coordination and cooperation in public assistance. The previous action plan against female genital mutilation had focused on health information, preventive health and treatment, but there was still a need for more knowledge and increased coordination of ordinary public services. Civil society and minority organizations played a vital role in addressing those important issues. Experience had shown that it could be misleading to focus only on forced marriage, which was why more recent efforts included measures to prevent severe restrictions on young people's freedom.
7. **Mr. Knudsen** (Norway) said that the Contact Committee for Immigrants and the Authorities had played an important role in presenting immigrants' views and opinions but much had changed since its establishment more than 30 years earlier. The Government had therefore decided to discontinue the Contact Committee and replace it with other measures to ensure dialogue, such as an annual dialogue meeting at which immigrant organizations and other stakeholders could share their concerns with the Government. In addition, the Government provided grants to immigrant organizations and to national resource centres working on integration issues.
8. Under proposed new regulations, applicants for Norwegian citizenship would have to show a minimum command of spoken Norwegian and pass a test in civics, which was administered in Norwegian. As most immigrants were offered 600 hours of language and social studies training over three years, they should be able to meet the

new conditions. Exemptions could be made for medical or other compelling reasons. The Government was considering amending the regulations to give women who had taken maternity leave during the course additional time to complete it. Immigrants from outside the European Union were required to pay for the course and, as attendance at language classes was in any case a condition of obtaining permanent residency and citizenship, some of them chose to do so.

9. An evaluation of the pilot project introducing a modest quota for persons from a non-Western immigrant background in 12 State enterprises showed that the project had raised awareness about the recruitment of immigrants. An evaluation of the Directorate of Integration and Diversity in 2013 had been generally positive, and the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion was working with the Directorate to make the improvements recommended in the evaluation.

10. **Ms. Skarstein** (Norway) said that the Anti-Discrimination Act protected against discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity. It applied to all spheres of society, with the exception of family life and other purely personal relationships involving private choices, such as choosing one's own friends.

11. Although racist organizations were not prohibited as such, criminal acts motivated by racism were punishable as hate crimes. The Penal Code protected against serious hate speech, including hate speech spread on the Internet. Private companies with more than 50 employees, and all public sector employers, were required to report on the measures they took to promote equality and non-discrimination. The Government did not plan to extend that requirement to all private employers. An independent examination, to be completed in March 2016, would help the Government decide whether or not to grant the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Tribunal the power to award reparation to victims.

12. In 2013, an independent research institution had evaluated the Action Plan to Promote Equality and Prevent Ethnic Discrimination and had determined that most of the measures had been completed and that coordination of the work had been satisfactory. It was far more complicated, however, to determine whether the Plan had actually reduced discrimination. Thus far, the Action Plan had not been renewed, but various ministries continued to carry out both general and targeted measures to prevent ethnic discrimination. The Democratic Readiness against Anti-Semitism and Racism (DEMBRA) programme would be continued and expanded to include schools outside the Oslo region.

13. The Child Welfare Act applied to all children in Norway regardless of background, nationality or residence status. A care order could be issued only if a child was subject to serious neglect, ill-treatment or abuse, and the order must be necessary and in the best interests of the child. Most children under the care of child welfare services were placed in foster homes. The shortage of foster homes was a challenge, and the Government was working to recruit more foster parents with minority backgrounds.

14. **Mr. Halvorsen** (Norway) said that, while employment rates were lower among immigrants than among Norwegian citizens, the overall picture was actually quite diverse. Both Norwegians and immigrants who lacked education or relevant skills faced difficulties when seeking employment, while a lack of knowledge of the Norwegian language and society posed an additional barrier for immigrants. Employment rates were higher among immigrants from the European Economic Area than for those from Asia and Africa, though immigrants from some Asian and African countries fared better than others.

15. The employment policy should be viewed from a broad perspective that also encompassed policies in other fields, such as economics, education and the family.

Employment policy in Norway was universal yet personalized, and priority was given to vulnerable groups such as at-risk youth, immigrants and persons with disabilities. Norway provided a fair and comprehensive social security net for all. It was true that discrimination existed in the Norwegian labour market, particularly in relation to recruitment. Possible reasons included a lack of information among employers, a surplus of jobseekers, as well as stereotypes and prejudice. To be effective, employment measures should be based on concrete information and knowledge and tailored to specific occupations.

16. Persons who received few or no subsistence benefits included persons who had little or no previous income from work, had a lack of work experience or received cash benefits. Most often, they were young persons or persons with an immigrant background. Generally speaking, the results of quota-based pilot projects had not been very positive, and he expected that that would apply to the one on quotas for non-Western persons in State enterprises. Better results had been achieved through tailored trainee programmes and supported on-the-job training. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was currently considering whether Norway should ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

17. **Ms. Ruud** (Norway) said that the Government was establishing a centre for research on right-wing extremism and would soon call for tenders for two new projects, one on measures to prevent online hate speech and hate crime and the other on mapping and preventing the spread of conspiracy theories. The Police Directorate would draw on the experiences of the Oslo police district when establishing national guidelines on preventing and following up on hate crimes. The Director-General of the Norwegian Prosecuting Authority had recently instructed police districts to make violence based on race or ethnicity a priority. The Police Academy provided training on radicalization and extremism, digital policing and diversity.

18. As the Convention had been incorporated into national law through the Anti-Discrimination Act, it could be directly applied by the courts. In the event of a conflict with other international instruments, however, those that had been incorporated through the Human Rights Act would prevail. In the event of a conflict with other provisions of statutory law, the conflict would be resolved using the ordinary principles of interpretation. To her knowledge, no such conflicts had ever arisen. As the Convention was largely implemented through more detailed provisions in national civil and criminal law, it was those provisions that were usually invoked by courts and tribunals. The Convention had been mentioned or applied in six Supreme Court judgements, the majority of them in criminal cases. Data on its application by the lower courts was not available. In 2012, the Supreme Court had lowered the threshold for determining when a discriminatory statement was punishable by law, a decision that was binding on lower courts.

19. Conditions at Trandum Detention Centre for immigrants had improved considerably. It had 137 places, and separate wings for women, unaccompanied minors and families. Detainees had their own rooms, each with a bathroom and television. Stays in the Centre were usually very short, lasting on average one day for adults and 20 hours for minors.

20. Since 2007 there had been a considerable increase in the number of foreigners begging. They often lived in the streets or camped in the forest without any sanitary facilities. In order to address the situation, in 2014 Parliament had adopted a provision to supplement the Police Act by permitting the adoption of local legislation — including bans — on begging. The provision stipulated that anti-begging regulations must be enforced without discrimination. Only one of the country's 428 municipalities

had imposed such a ban. A grant of some 10 million Norwegian kroner had been allocated to humanitarian organizations providing food and shelter to beggars.

21. **Ms. Fjelberg** (Norway) said that the Government had put forward a proposal to increase the residence requirements for permanent residence by two years. The proposal also sought to strengthen the capacity of the Directorate of Immigration to identify foreign nationals who had acquired residence status on the basis of fictional accounts and to ascertain whether they had committed a criminal offence. The proposal had been circulated for public consultation in early 2015. Exceptions to the residence requirements included a rule allowing persons who had been granted residence on the basis of family ties to an abusive person to renew their permit independently in order to avoid staying in the abusive relationship for fear of deportation. The decision was generally based on the victim's account of the situation. In the past three years, 50 per cent of applications had been granted.

22. Her Government shared the concern that children disappearing from asylum reception centres might be victims of trafficking. The Plan of Action against Human Trafficking therefore included measures concerning unaccompanied minors. The Directorate of Immigration and the police followed special guidelines: investigations were thorough, but the scarcity of information on missing asylum-seeking children often made them particularly challenging. A study of the problem had been commissioned and results were expected before the end of 2015.

23. Representatives assigned to unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors were more than guardians. They had expertise in asylum procedures and represented minors' interests in their applications. Once asylum had been granted, a minor was assigned a regular guardian.

24. The new immigration appeals system was not yet operational. The Ministry of Justice was considering amendments to the current appeals system on the basis of Norwegian Official Report NOU 2020:12. The Government had commissioned a further report on whether the Immigration Appeals Board should be replaced by an immigration court.

25. Illegal residents had restricted access to health-care services. All residents, regardless of their migration status, were entitled to emergency care and health care that could not be postponed without the risk of death, permanent severe disability or injury or severe pain. Children and pregnant women were entitled to any medical care they might require. Non-residents must pay for health care, unless they were unable to do so, but advance payment was not required for emergency care or health care that could not be postponed.

26. **Mr. Megard** (Norway) said that Kven had been recognized as a minority language in 2005. Various Government-funded projects were being implemented to revitalize the Kven language and culture. Kven and Finnish pupils in the counties of Finnmark and Troms were entitled to tuition in Kven or Finnish. The University of Tromsø offered Kven language studies and in 2015 the Kven Institute in Børselv had been granted 5 million Norwegian kroner for its work on standardization and terminology, and to prepare a grammar and a dictionary. In 2014, the Institute had received a grant from the Ministry of Culture to establish immersion kindergartens or "language nests". Government-sponsored Kven language centres offered language courses and tuition and served as meeting places for the Kven-speaking community.

27. **Ms. Asmyhr** (Norway) said that few Norwegian Roma families had survived the Second World War. On the occasion of International Roma Day 2015, the Prime Minister had formally apologized to the Norwegian Roma. The Government had pledged to grant the Roma collective reparation and was currently consulting with Roma representatives on the modalities for such reparation. Discrimination against the

Roma in Norway was particularly serious in the housing sector. In order to address the issue, the Norwegian State Housing Bank and the municipalities conducted information campaigns and training courses. Five ministries had developed a joint national strategy for housing and support services, in an effort to consolidate and focus efforts to improve access to housing for disadvantaged populations.

28. An independent evaluation had shown that the Action Plan to Improve Living Conditions for Roma in Oslo had produced poor results. Adult education programmes, for example, had not proved effective and a focus on child education had been recommended instead. The resources freed up by discontinuing adult education programmes would be used to strengthen the Roma school mediator programme, which had greatly improved relations between schools and Roma families. All new measures would be implemented in close consultation with the Roma community.

29. **Mr. Megard** (Norway) said that marine salmon fishing regulations in Troms and Finnmark took account of the status of salmon stocks, but also of the importance of salmon fishing to Sami culture. The Norwegian Environmental Agency was drafting new regulations on salmon fishing with the full participation of the Sami Parliament. Government policy on managing natural resources was mindful of the interests of the Sami people while at the same time trying to prevent over-harvesting, which could jeopardize the survival of a resource and thus the cultural practices related to it. Resource management based on scientific data, international obligations and the precautionary principle would also benefit Sami culture in the long run. As to spring hunting of ducks, which was contrary to the tenets of modern game management but an old tradition in Kautokeino, it had been agreed with the Sami authorities that quotas would be imposed for some species, and spring hunting of one vulnerable species would be banned. At the same time, local authorities would be required to report regularly on the contribution of the spring hunt to Sami culture.

30. A pilot project was being implemented to improve Sami interpreting services in emergency and municipal health centres, using videoconference equipment to provide a 24-hour service. The Northern Norway Regional Health Trust had been requested to provide funding.

31. **Ms. Hjelde** (Norway) said that Norwegian companies operating abroad and multinational companies operating in Norway were expected to conduct human rights due diligence and engage in meaningful dialogue with peoples and communities that might be affected by their operations. The Government was developing a national action plan to implement the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

32. **Mr. Avtonomov** said that, while it was commendable that the State party provided 600 hours of Norwegian language training for foreigners, he wondered which of the various Norwegian languages they were required to learn.

33. He also asked whether the dialogue meetings the Government held with foreign nationals were simply an exchange of views, or whether a report was produced. What follow-up action was taken on the issues identified?

34. **Mr. Khalaf** asked why the Convention had not been incorporated into the Human Rights Act.

35. **Ms. Ruud** (Norway) said that it had been decided to incorporate only very general human rights conventions in the Human Rights Act and there was no plan to incorporate the Convention for the time being.

36. **Mr. Knudsen** (Norway) said that the official languages were Bokmål and Nynorsk. Sami was an official language in some municipalities. No reports were

prepared on the dialogue meetings, but a follow-up meeting was planned for October 2015. Dialogue meetings were also held at the county level.

37. **Ms. Crickley** asked whether women from minority groups and the Sami community had been consulted on the content of the White Paper on gender equality and whether they would be actively involved in monitoring, implementing and assessing the proposed policies and actions. She also wished to know whether LGBT persons from minority groups would be consulted about the proposed LGBT strategy.

38. It was important to ensure that the new national human rights institution had adequate resources to carry out its functions.

39. She asked whether the State party would consider reinforcing the promotion of ethnic equality by requiring national and local authorities to evaluate their commitment to ethnic equality, to undertake continuous risk assessments and to develop targeted actions to address such risks.

40. Stressing the need for a holistic approach to racial discrimination, she strongly recommended that the former Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination should be reactivated.

41. She enquired about measures to ensure that the Roma community and Travellers were actively involved in decisions affecting them. It appeared from the evaluation of the Action Plan to Improve Living Conditions for Roma in Oslo that the quality of the measures taken was questionable. Any future plan should focus on community development, education and housing and should target Romani and Traveller women.

42. She underscored the importance of non-discriminatory application of Oslo's ban on sleeping rough. The Committee had received reports of homeless Roma being taken away in trucks and left at the edge of a forest.

43. **Mr. Kemal** said that the employment of minorities and immigrants played an important role in promoting loyalty and adherence to Norwegian values. A scientific study had been made in France of the statistical relationship between a person's race and his or her rejection by employers. He suggested that the new national human rights institution should work with the academic community to determine whether such discrimination was occurring in Norway. The Government should also take affirmative action to prevent the alienation of young people who were discriminated against and rejected by employers.

44. **Ms. Horne** (Norway) said that the Government welcomed all contributions to white papers from civil society and NGOs. It had held several meetings with civil society organizations, including those representing minorities, to discuss the White Paper on gender equality and possible implementation strategies. The issues raised included health care, education, employment and violence against women. The final version would be communicated to the participants and submitted to Parliament within the next few months.

45. The Government had decided in June 2015 to produce an action plan on LGBT issues such as health-care problems and hate speech, and covering LGBT members of minority groups. A major dialogue meeting to discuss inputs from civil society, including LGBT organizations, would be held in autumn 2015.

46. **Ms. Ruud** (Norway) said that the Norwegian Parliament allocated funds for the national institution for human rights. It had allocated 9.3 million Norwegian kroner in 2015, which was equivalent to over €1 million.

47. **Ms. Skarstein** (Norway) said that Norway had implemented the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action by means of several action plans against ethnic discrimination. The Government had not yet decided whether a new and more wide-

ranging action plan should be adopted. However, the various ministries were taking targeted and systematic measures to prevent ethnic discrimination, such as the Action Plan against Radicalization and Violent Extremism and the Action Plan against anti-Semitism.

48. The Child Welfare Act was applicable to all children, and the best interests of the child were the primary consideration. As the welfare services attached great importance to family ties, assistance to children requiring care was generally provided in the home. Removal of children from the home without parental consent or under a care order was a measure of last resort. Parents had access to free legal aid and measures were being taken to raise minority groups' awareness of welfare services.

49. **Mr. Megard** (Norway) said that the Roma were a small community of about 700 people in Oslo. The Romani or Tater people were a far larger community. The report on the eviction of Roma during the 1920s and 1930s and their tragic fate during the Holocaust had contained no specific recommendations. However, the Norwegian authorities shared the Committee's concern about the problems that the Roma were facing and had engaged in a dialogue with the community on follow-up to the report and the evaluation of the Action Plan to Improve Living Conditions for Roma in Oslo.

50. **Ms. Ruud** (Norway) said that the increase in the number of homeless persons living in the streets and begging in public places was a new development. Many of them were in fact Roma. It was difficult to compare police behaviour towards homeless Norwegians and homeless foreigners. Norwegians had no language barriers and were aware of the type of behaviour that would meet with a favourable response. In summer 2012 some foreigners had been removed by car from the city centre as an alternative to being taken into custody and fined. The fact that such measures were not always recorded by the police had given rise to complaints. Logging procedures had since improved and the frequency of the practice had been reduced.

51. **Mr. Vázquez** said that, according to information received from civil society, the anti-immigrant views endorsed by the Human Rights Service, an NGO that was funded by the Government, reflected widely shared views in Norwegian society. If the Government wished to counter hate speech, it should adopt an approach based on anti-racism and tolerance. In fact, its strategies seemed to be in line with the recommendations of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud in his report on hate speech and hate crime, as well as with those of civil society. He suggested that the State party should redouble its efforts to implement those recommendations and develop a comprehensive long-term strategy to deal with the issue.

52. He appreciated the State party's admission that inequality existed in the labour market. The Ombud believed that the problem was largely due to non-conscious stereotyping. A proactive approach by employers should therefore be encouraged and sanctions should be imposed for failure to comply with the principle of employment equality.

53. The Committee had received information from the national human rights institution concerning discrimination in the enforcement of the ban on sleeping in public places. Roma and persons of African descent were three times more likely to be removed and their property was confiscated in 61 per cent of cases, compared with 26 per cent for other groups. The European Court of Human Rights had ruled that a ban on sleeping in public places could amount to inhuman and degrading treatment if accompanied by racist speech or excessive force. According to the national human rights institution, removals were frequently accompanied by racist speech.

54. **Mr. Murillo Martínez** asked whether the State party had ratified the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe. He enquired

about its interaction with the Council of Europe and other multilateral European bodies in addressing the current wave of racism in the region.

55. He commended the State party's action against female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. However, the measures seemed to focus on access to health-care services. He asked whether there were any indicators of the preventive impact of such measures.

56. **Ms. Horne** (Norway) said that the Government wished to ensure that many different views were expressed in the integration debate. Successive Governments had funded the Human Rights Service and the current Government had no plans to change that policy. The increase in the funds allocated to that NGO in 2015 had been based on parliamentary consultations. Grants were also provided to local and national immigrant organizations, many of which were critical of the Government's policies.

57. **Ms. Nygård** (Norway) said that the delegation had taken note of the suggestion that the Government should redouble its efforts to implement the Ombud's recommendations concerning hate speech and develop a comprehensive long-term strategy to deal with the issue.

58. **Ms. Skarstein** (Norway), referring to discrimination in the labour market and non-conscious stereotyping, said that a comprehensive discrimination bill was being drafted. It would cover, inter alia, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation and disability. The Ombud and other authorities had taken steps to alert employers to the requirement of non-discrimination.

59. **Ms. Ruud** (Norway) said that the use of racist speech when dealing with people who were sleeping rough was entirely unacceptable.

60. Norway had ratified the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime in 2008. As a non-member of the European Union, her country attached great importance to the Council of Europe. The European Convention on Human Rights was faithfully reflected in the Norwegian legal system and in the country's policies.

61. **Ms. Hjelde** (Norway) confirmed that Norway was actively involved in Council of Europe activities aimed at promoting democracy and human rights and combating racism. The recently published White Paper on human rights contained a detailed account of such activities.

62. **Ms. Skarstein** (Norway) said that the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe had published its fifth report on Norway in February 2015. The Norwegian authorities were discussing follow-up to its recommendations.

63. **Mr. Knudsen** (Norway) said that according to the evaluation of the Action Plan against Forced Marriage, the Plan had reinforced preventive efforts and led to greater availability of support services. Young people in need of assistance now contacted such services more frequently. According to the evaluation of the Action Plan against Female Genital Mutilation, the Plan had led to a stronger focus on targeted health information and preventive action. A programme offering health care where necessary had also been implemented. Four integration counsellors on forced marriage operated in Pakistan, Jordan, Turkey and Kenya, providing assistance to victims when they were abroad. They had helped many young people to return to Norway, thereby preventing forced marriage and FGM. The evaluations had concluded, however, that there was a need for increased coordination of public services.

64. **Mr. Kut** said that racism had not really been discussed as such. It was important to call the problem by its name and talk about it frankly. Racism existed in all the States parties to the Convention, and if racism appeared in political discourse and the

media, there was a serious problem and serious counter-measures had to be taken. What measures was Norway planning to take? Did Norway have the political will to take steps to combat racism? What policies would it develop specifically to combat racism in political discourse?

The meeting was suspended at 12.20 p.m. and resumed at 12.27 p.m.

65. **Ms. Horne** (Norway) said that the Government of Norway, civil society and the Committee were working towards the same goal. Combating racism and racial discrimination was an important objective, but there might be differences in the methods chosen. She would not comment on individual cases, but she believed that the delegation had spoken extensively about Norwegian policies. The ultimate goal was to create a more equal and just society for all.

66. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, recalled that some of the Committee's questions had not been fully answered, including those regarding the policy on racism in sport, and regarding action for indigenous people, notably measures to demarcate and ensure respect for Sami lands. What efforts were being made to preserve the ancestral knowledge of indigenous people, which was vital for the preservation of habitat and biodiversity?

67. **Mr. Amir** said that the State party seemed to think that the problem of racism could be solved merely by enacting relevant legislation. However, in reality there was a great deal of racism in Norway and he wondered what impact NGOs and civil society were having, given the scale of the problem. What was the role of the church in the fight against racism?

68. **Mr. Avtonomov** asked whether there were plans to commemorate the International Decade for People of African Descent. He wondered whether the Uncultivated Land Tribunal had enough resources to accomplish its task. He requested the delegation to provide more information in future periodic reports on the role of the Children's Ombudsman in combating multiple discrimination against the children of minorities, refugees and migrants.

69. **Ms. Skarstein** (Norway) said that it was important for all children to be able to take part in sports, irrespective of their language, religion, skin colour, national background or parents' income. The Norwegian Confederation of Sports had taken an active stand against racism, showing zero tolerance for any form of discrimination in sport. The Norwegian Football Association had also taken steps to combat racism on the football field.

70. **Mr. Megard** (Norway) said that both the Uncultivated Land Tribunal and the Finnmark Commission had suffered budget shortfalls, which had resulted in some activities having to be postponed. Ancestral knowledge was always taken into consideration in decision-making. The Sami University College was conducting a study into ancestral knowledge and how to integrate it into public authority decision-making processes and consultations. All government ministries had procedures in place for consultations with the Sami people on matters that might affect them directly. Information on those procedures could be found in the reports of Norway to other treaty bodies and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The King of Norway had apologized to the Sami people in 1997, and the Prime Minister had apologized to other national minorities earlier in 2015.

71. **Ms. Skarstein** (Norway) said that Norway had no plans to adopt a programme of activities for the International Decade for People of African Descent, as it was concerned that the singling out of one form of discrimination would disregard other forms of discrimination and thus undermine efforts to combat racism.

72. **Ms. Nygård** (Norway) said that there was no doubt that racism and discrimination existed in Norway, as in many other countries. The Government had therefore adopted measures to address structural and institutional discrimination and discriminatory legislation.

73. The importance of an active, independent civil society to any democratic system could not be over-emphasized. That was why the authorities had established special funding schemes. Civil society organizations were systematically involved in dialogue with the Government, including on the drafting of bills and international reports, notably reports to the United Nations.

74. **Mr. Bossuyt** (Country Rapporteur) commended the State party's vibrant and active civil society, including the independent national human rights institution. He hoped it would soon receive A status accreditation and adequate funding. He thanked the Sami delegation and the NGOs present for attending the meetings and presenting their alternative reports. The Convention should be incorporated into the Human Rights Act on an equal footing with other human rights conventions. Everyone agreed that racial discrimination existed in Norwegian society and he encouraged Norway to step up its efforts to combat racism.

75. **Ms. Horne** (Norway) said that the Government was striving to improve protection against discrimination to ensure that all citizens enjoyed equal opportunities and freedom to make their own choices in life. Many of the challenges faced were common to other countries, and it was fruitful to discuss the issues in an international context.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.