



**International Convention on
the Elimination
of all Forms of
Racial Discrimination**

Distr.
GENERAL

CERD/C/SR.1762
10 August 2006

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Sixty-ninth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1762nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 2 August 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. de GOUTTES

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 6) (continued)

Seventh periodic report of Estonia (CERD/C/465/Add.1; HRI/CORE/1/Add.50/Rev.1)
(continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Estonia resumed their places at the Committee table.
2. Mr. CALI TZAY asked for more information about the efforts of the Estonian Government to promote the integration of national minorities into society. In his own country, such activities had often been aimed at the assimilation of minorities at the expense of the loss of their unique identity.
3. He also asked for information about the following points: any concrete results achieved by the initiative to combat trafficking in persons; the impact of the Gender Equality Act and the multicultural policy; the assertion in paragraph 47 of document CERD/C/465/Add.1 that genocide, apartheid and racial segregation did not exist in Estonia; and the percentage of people who spoke the various languages. Paragraph 168 of the report stated that any language could be the language of instruction in a basic school: however, was the curriculum the same in every case, or was it adapted to reflect the history and culture of the group concerned?
4. Mr. AMIR noted that the right to freedom of expression was sometimes incompatible with the need to suppress incitement to racial hatred. How was that contradiction handled in the new Penal Code? Did judges, lawyers and government officials receive special training to help them make decisions which would contribute to the elimination of racial hatred? Did they study in other countries in order to obtain an international perspective, for example? Were people of non-Estonian nationality entitled to participate in legal decision-making?
5. Mr. KOORT (Estonia), replying to members' questions about the results of the integration programme for stateless persons (CERD/C/465/Add.1, paras. 34 et seq.), said that the programme had begun in January 2005 and would continue until 2007, at a cost of approximately 4 million Estonian kroons, funded equally by the Government and the European Union. The programme comprised the provision of trainers to assist applicants for Estonian citizenship; harmonization of information systems; the provision of information on citizenship requirements; and training courses for schoolchildren and adults, which had been provided for over 10,000 people in Tallinn and other areas by July 2006. The number of persons who had acquired Estonian citizenship by naturalization was now greater than the number who remained stateless.
6. Ms. KALJULÄTE (Estonia), replying to members' questions about unemployment rates among people from national minorities, said that unemployment in the country as a whole had stood at 6.4 per cent in the first quarter of 2006, the lowest rate since 1995. In Ida-Viru county, which had a large Russian-speaking population, unemployment stood at 15 per cent because of

problems related to the reorganization of the economy and labour market, but even that figure was the lowest for seven years. The number of people in employment in the county had risen by 7.5 per cent in 2005. Young Russian speakers now filled specialist and skilled jobs more frequently than in the past, and their economic status was similar to that of Estonian speakers.

7. Replying to questions about the measures taken by the Government to combat unemployment, she said that 201 million kroons, or 0.12 per cent of gross domestic product, had been devoted to the implementation of labour market policy in 2005. In the same year, 773 training courses had been conducted in Russian, attended by over 5,000 people. Forty-five Estonian language courses had been provided for Russian speakers in that year. The Labour Market Services and Subsidies Act of January 2006 sought to provide services tailored to the individual client, with particular emphasis on groups with special needs, such as non-Estonian speakers.

8. In 2004/05, measures worth 90 million kroons, partly financed by the European Social Fund and benefiting some 2,500 people, had been undertaken to increase employment among non-Estonian speakers. Other programmes supported by the European Social Fund covered occupational Estonian language training for a number of specified occupations, including police officers, teachers and nurses. The action planned for 2006/07 included more training for employment consultants, to help them target services more effectively at non-Estonian speakers, as well as cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Social Affairs regarding principles for the teaching of Estonian to unemployed people.

9. Replying to a question about the level of wages paid to different ethnic groups, she said that information relating to particular groups was obtained only from the individuals concerned, and could not be compared with official wage statistics, which were obtained from employers.

10. Ms. ILVES (Estonia), replying to questions about discrimination by individual persons in the fields of housing, education and public services, said that the protection from discrimination afforded by article 12 of the Constitution and article 152 of the Penal Code applied to all spheres of life. However, there was no legislation specifically prohibiting discrimination in housing or other social contexts. Under Article 9 of the Constitution, the same rights, liberties and duties applied to Estonian citizens, citizens of other countries and stateless persons. Everyone had the right to education. No one could forcibly enter and search a person's home or workplace. People had the right to buy or rent a home regardless of their origin, language or ethnic background: if they had no home, or needed a specially adapted home because of a disability, the local authorities were obliged to assist them.

11. Social security benefits, including family and disability benefits, and social services were provided for all persons legally resident in Estonia, including temporary residents and refugees. Illegal residents had no right to social security benefits, but could obtain emergency medical treatment. The regulations relating to health and unemployment insurance applied equally to citizens and legally resident non-citizens.

12. Mr. SOONE (Estonia), replying to members' questions about the languages used in the education system, said that there were 415 schools in which Estonian was the language of instruction, 77 schools using Russian and 2 schools using English. In addition, there were bilingual schools: 24 using Estonian and Russian, 1 using Estonian and Finnish and 1 using Estonian and English. The State also supported education in other minority languages. The curriculum was the same in all languages, although teaching in minority languages also covered the history and culture of the ethnic or language group concerned.

13. The aim of the integration programme was to help all ethnic groups to manage better in their daily life and work and to communicate more effectively with others. The Government wanted every ethnic group to preserve its own unique identity, since it had always greatly valued diversity.

14. Mr. KOORT (Estonia), in response to the Committee's concern about alarming HIV/AIDS rates among national minorities, said the first case of HIV/AIDS had been diagnosed in 1988. The number of cases had continued to grow, especially in 2000 and 2001; in 2005, 344 new cases had been diagnosed. Although the HIV/AIDS rate in Estonia was the highest outside Africa, prevention activities had succeeded in slowing the increase in the number of cases in recent years. Most cases were confined to the 15 to 24 age group, generally intravenous drug users, prostitutes, homosexuals and bisexuals and those with at-risk behaviours or infected with sexually transmitted diseases. The epidemic had originated among needle-sharing intravenous drug users in the east of the country and the Tallinn region.

15. Prevention activities included counselling and 21 needle exchange centres, and addiction treatment centres were available in three major cities, including Tallinn. There were six free anonymous counselling centres, two of which were in the capital, and HIV/AIDS tests were available at youth counselling centres and from doctors. Anyone diagnosed with tuberculosis could also take an HIV/AIDS test and blood donors were tested for HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and C and other contagious diseases. No cases of infection from transfusions or transplants had been reported.

16. Prevention activities were given special importance in the north-east of the country, because the majority of those infected with HIV/AIDS were Russian speaking, and in Tallinn. HIV treatment was provided free of charge to approximately 80 individuals. Although anti-retroviral treatment was available only in West Tallinn Central Hospital, negotiations were under way to expand treatment options to hospitals in the eastern region. In 2006 his Government had budgeted 4.5 million euros for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, in addition to 2.5 million euros provided by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

17. Ms. ILVES (Estonia) said there had been no specific cases in which the courts had invoked the provisions of the Convention. However, there had been court decisions involving human rights violations on a wide range of issues. The Supreme Court had for example confirmed the right of victims to have recourse to the courts if their constitutional rights to the security of the home and privacy were violated or if they believed that the police had carried out

illegal searches or seizures. The administrative courts had also heard cases involving human rights violations based on poor prison conditions. If the courts found that a violation of a human right had occurred, compensation could be ordered.

18. In the context of property rights, the Supreme Court had dealt with issues such as unequal treatment and ordered the restitution of unlawfully expropriated property. Complaints had also been heard in the area of lack of equal opportunity in education; for example one individual had filed a claim because he had not been able to receive training in the field of aviation because such courses were not funded by the State.

19. Ms. KALJULÄTE (Estonia) said that the Chancellor of Justice had received complaints of human rights violations involving discrimination based on ethnic origin or language. For example, residents not proficient in Estonian had asked the Chancellor for a ruling on whether or not the language requirements for communications with the State unjustifiably restricted constitutional guarantees. The Chancellor had ruled that the requirement that civil proceedings be held in Estonian did not violate the language rights of non-Estonian speakers because interpretation services could be provided and judges could request that documents be translated into languages other than Estonian. Likewise, the requirement that all correspondence with the State be conducted in Estonian did not violate the Constitution because there were provisions which allowed for flexibility and discretion in accepting and translating documents.

20. Mr. KOORT (Estonia), with regard to the issue of multiculturalism, said that according to a 2005 review of the Government's integration programme, efforts to provide Estonian language training to non-Estonian adults were succeeding in reducing the number of non-ethnic Estonian citizens who did not speak Estonian, although the proportion was still too high, in particular in the largely Russian-speaking north-east of the country and among students in vocational schools, which reduced the latter's ability to participate in society on an equal basis with Estonian speakers.

21. The proportion of residents with undetermined citizenship was currently 33 per cent, as compared to 43 per cent at independence. Pursuant to the Citizenship Act, awareness-raising and training was provided to increase the number of residents who applied for Estonian citizenship. Efforts were also under way to strengthen cooperation amongst the relevant agencies. A midterm review of the social competence subprogramme of the integration programme, the purpose of which was to ensure the socio-economic integration of non-Estonians, had criticized that programme for being too fragmented, but socio-economic indicators for the Russian-speaking minority nevertheless showed that they were gradually reaching the same level as Estonians. Although Russian speakers were still disproportionately represented in industry and blue collar occupations, younger Russian speakers were increasingly well represented among skilled workers: those under 30 represented 42 per cent of the latter category. Relative to Estonians of the same age, Russian speakers working in the area of customer services represented 17 per cent of the total compared to 23 per cent for Estonians.

22. In the past Russian speakers had been more likely to be living in poverty but the current figures were 5 per cent for Russian speakers and 4 per cent for Estonians. Those living in poverty were generally unemployed and lived in the eastern part of the country. Russian speakers were increasingly integrated into society and the young tended to identify themselves as

Estonians. The midterm assessment of the integration programme had identified challenges and defined measures to improve social integration and non-Estonians were not currently considered to be groups at risk in comparison with the Estonian population.

23. With regard to the media and minority groups, he said that digital television had made it possible to increase programming for the Roma minority and an increasing number of programmes in Estonian were available with Russian subtitles or in both Estonian and Russian. Russian speakers, especially in the east, also had access to numerous Russian programmes via cable TV, which they tended to prefer to Estonian television programmes, and they also had access to three local Russian language channels.

24. He pointed out that there was sometimes a lack of information on ethnic minorities because, except in the case of a census, it was prohibited to ask an individual about his ethnic background. Even in a census, an individual had the right to refuse to provide such information. Accordingly, information was incomplete; sometimes attempts were made to estimate the numbers of minorities according to surname, but even that was unsatisfactory since many individuals of Russian origin had Estonian-sounding names and vice versa.

25. Ms. von WIRÉN (Estonia) recalled that in 2003 the Social Contract Foundation had been established with a view to promoting the development of society as a whole; the Foundation was made up of representatives of political parties and all sectors of society. Its purpose was to promote a wide-ranging interactive dialogue aimed at achieving consensus on important development questions. She took note of the concerns expressed by Mr. Yutzis about restrictions on foreigners' right to vote and join political parties but pointed out that according to the Constitution only citizens could be members of political parties and recalled that in most countries non-citizens did not have the right to vote. Estonia was in fact one of the few countries which allowed non-citizens to vote in local elections. Even citizens from minority groups in fact tended to support the major political parties rather than minority-specific political parties, which underscored their desire to play an active role with regard to all issues of concern to Estonian society.

26. Growing numbers of non-citizen residents were applying for citizenship, evidence of their desire to integrate into and participate in society. The legal status and rights of those who chose not to apply for citizenship were clearly set out in the Constitution and the Aliens Act. Persons of undetermined citizenship had the right to residence and were provided with an identity and travel document renewable every 10 years; most such individuals were originally from the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Every effort was being made to encourage them to apply for citizenship. The number of individuals of undetermined citizenship had dropped from 500,000 in 1992 to 123,000 in June 2006. In 2005 more than 7,000 individuals had applied for citizenship and the number of naturalized citizens, 140,000, exceeded the number of those who had not yet applied. According to a recent survey, 61 per cent of the latter intended to apply for Estonian citizenship. Those who chose not to apply in some cases saw no need to do so because they could still work and travel freely or simply had doubts about acquiring Estonian citizenship. She hoped that over time, thanks to the integration programme, they would be convinced to apply for citizenship. She noted that in Estonia the principle of jus sanguinis applied; a child born of an Estonian citizen automatically acquired Estonian citizenship.

27. Ms. HION (Estonia), replying to Mr. Yutzis and Mr. Pillai, said that although some sources estimated the number of Roma in Estonia to be as high as 1,000 to 1,500, according to the 2000 census there were 542 Roma in Estonia; of course, some Roma could have decided not to declare their ethnic origin. The need to increase school attendance and lower dropout rates for Roma children had been recognized by her Government; the Ministry of Education had established a special commission to increase awareness amongst Roma children of the importance of education, beginning at the kindergarten level, with a view to ensuring that Roma children completed at least their basic education. Roma children who had shown a desire to succeed had in fact gone on to higher levels of education. According to Ministry of Education statistics, there were currently 67 Roma children attending school. She stressed that her Government believed that every child should receive an adequate education.

28. She disputed reports according to which some Roma children were sent to institutions for the mentally handicapped because they did not speak Estonian. In fact, most Roma did speak Estonian and many were Estonian citizens. Poor attendance and high dropout rates did affect Roma children's ability to follow the curriculum but special measures had been implemented to assist those children, including the establishment of a special school where they could receive more attention and follow individualized programmes. There were many reasons why Roma children tended to drop out, including lack of interest, lack of support at home, family or health problems, etc. but she stressed that each case was evaluated by a committee made up of specialists such as teachers, doctors and psychologists.

29. Referring to the alleged negative representation of the Roma in the media, she said that according to information received from the national television stations, the Roma minority was referred to only in news and cultural programmes, and there was no record of any depiction of them in entertainment shows. The authorities strongly condemned any racist attitudes displayed in the media, and criminal proceedings had been initiated in a number of cases.

30. Regarding the issue of translation, although the country report had originally been drafted in English, it had subsequently been posted on the Ministry's website in Estonian. The practice was to translate the reports submitted to the various treaty bodies and their concluding observations into Estonian. The possibility of translating the concluding observations into Russian in the future had not been ruled out, but it was not currently considered a priority. A number of steps were being taken to disseminate the reports and concluding observations as broadly as possible, including through a series of seminars. In addition, teachers of civic studies from Estonian and Russian secondary schools had recently been involved in a human rights programme in which the issue of country reports and the observations of treaty bodies had also been addressed.

31. On the question of international instruments, although Estonia was not a party to the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, it had not ignored their provisions. National legislation had been analysed in relation to both conventions and it had been found that the rights and freedoms provided for in the first instrument were already guaranteed to stateless persons residing in the

national territory. With regard to the second instrument, the State integration policy included a subprogramme to reduce statelessness. The Government currently had no plans to accede to either convention, but would focus on taking measures at the national level.

32. Regarding national human rights institutions in Estonia, there were ongoing discussions, led by the Legal Centre for Human Rights, on whether the office of the Chancellor of Justice could be considered a national human rights institution, in fulfilment of the Paris Principles, or whether it would be necessary to establish a new institution. No conclusion had yet been reached.

33. Although Estonia was not a party to the United Nations or Council of Europe conventions on the protection of migrant workers, its labour legislation ensured non-discriminatory treatment to all workers, and it was therefore not deemed necessary to draft special legislation on migrant workers or to accede to those instruments.

34. Regarding article 14 and the amendment to article 8 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Government had started the process to make a declaration recognizing the competence of the Committee in accordance with article 14 a number of years previously and had received positive feedback from Government agencies, but the process had been suspended due to technical difficulties. There were plans, however, to resume the process. The Government had not yet considered accepting the amendment to article 8, which would require discussions among various ministries and Government agencies.

35. The amended wording of the article of the Penal Code dealing with the punishability of the crime of incitement to social hatred was contained in paragraph 56 of the country report.

36. Mr. SOONE (Estonia) said that, although the Language Act stipulated that public signs, signposts, announcements, notices and advertisements should, as a rule, be in Estonian, the Language Inspectorate and the Chancellor of Justice had expressed the opinion that other languages could be used, thereby eliminating any security risk.

37. The state of health of the Estonian language had improved considerably since independence, and it was not under any immediate threat. However, there was a need for legal provisions to ensure long-term stability. One of the principal factors influencing the language was globalization, as it should be borne in mind that there were fewer than 1 million native speakers of Estonian. One of the most important aspects of the integration process was language training, which had already yielded significant results in terms of the improved status and knowledge of the language. One of the aims of the language policy was to assist particularly the younger generations and provide adequate education in and of Estonian in schools.

38. The situation regarding Russian military pensioners had improved since 1994. There were fewer than 10,000 Russian military pensioners, which constituted a small proportion of the total 124,000 non-citizens in Estonia. The vast majority of the military pensioners were living in Estonia with residence permits, and they could all apply for European Union long-term resident status.

39. During the course of investigation procedures in cases of incitement to social hatred it was possible to commission a semiotic expert assessment, and this had been done in all 10 of the proceedings instated.

40. Ms. KALJULÄTE (Estonia) said that population decline had slowed in recent years, from 0.4 per cent in 2003 to 0.2 per cent in 2005, and had been accompanied by an increase in the birth rate. The size of the population had not been significantly affected by emigration, since, according to Eurostat data, in 2005 emigration had exceeded immigration by only 0.3 persons per 1,000 inhabitants. The number of persons who had left the country to study and work abroad following EU accession had not increased dramatically, and for most the move was temporary. In 2005, the Estonian Migration Foundation had provided financial support for the remigration of 217 persons to their ethnic country of origin, primarily the Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine, and for the return of 12 ethnic Estonians.

41. Ms. ILVES (Estonia) said that a recent amendment to the Penal Code had removed the distinction between public and private interests in relation to incitement to social hatred in article 151. In the same article, the reference to “origin” included both ethnic and national origin. Under the Constitution, “origin” was defined as “a person’s natural biological ties with his or her ancestors”. Article 151 also criminalized racist organizations, in which case the guilt of each member of the organization must be proved. If only one person was found guilty and the rest were deemed innocent, the organization could not be deemed racist. Under the new wording of the Penal Code, legal persons could also be punished.

42. Regarding the relationship between incitement to social hatred and terrorism in Estonian legislation, the relevant definitions were provided for in different articles of the Penal Code and carried different sanctions. Under article 237, terrorism consisted of acts aimed at causing health damage or death or the unlawful seizure, damage or destruction of property, committed with the intention of provoking war or an international conflict or for political or religious causes, and was punishable by 3 to 12 years’ imprisonment or life imprisonment. The same act, if committed by a legal person, was punishable by compulsory dissolution. Article 250 of the Penal Code provided that public incitement to the commission of a criminal offence against a foreign State or international organization was punishable by a fine or up to three years’ imprisonment.

43. With regard to Council Directive 2000/43/EC, the so-called race directive, a draft act on equality aimed at harmonizing that directive implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin had been abandoned in 2002 due to a lack of consensus on the issue. However, discussions were continuing among various ministries and the Ministry of Justice intended to resubmit the bill to the Government in the near future. In July 2006 Estonia had received formal notice from the Commission of the European Communities concerning the transposition of the directive.

44. Regarding practical legal redress in cases of ethnic and racial discrimination, any person whose rights had been violated had recourse to the courts on the basis of article 12 of the Constitution, which prohibited discrimination on several grounds. In January 2004, the mandate

of the Chancellor of Justice had been extended, making him competent to resolve discrimination disputes arising between private persons by means of a conciliation procedure. Petitions could be filed requesting verification of alleged violations of fundamental rights and freedoms not only by State agencies but also by local government bodies, legal persons in public law and natural or legal persons in private law performing public duties.

45. The conciliation procedure was based on the assumption that false opinions and stereotypes could be changed by educating people rather than by punishing or threatening to punish them. The Chancellor played an active role as mediator in conciliation proceedings, aiming to find common ground between the parties. The procedure was strictly voluntary, although the results of the procedure were binding once the Chancellor had confirmed the agreement of the parties, and the agreement could not be challenged in court. The main advantage of the conciliation procedure over court proceedings was its discreetness, since information was not made public and statistics were provided anonymously. It was also simpler, more flexible and less expensive than court proceedings.

46. Mr. KOORT (Estonia) said that, in the 2005 budget, 5.9 million Estonian kroons had been allocated for the Estonian Council of Churches and 300,000 kroons had been made available for the publication Church of Estonia. The Council of Churches was an association of different Christian Churches and congregations, which distributed the money to different confessions according to the size of the community concerned. There was also a weekly public television programme entitled “Church Life Chronicle” that broadcast information of interest to the Christian community.

47. Religious marriages performed by a priest or clergyman who was authorized to carry out such functions had the same status as civil marriages; that also applied to marriages performed by foreign priests or clergymen authorized by their countries of origin.

48. The confusion over the terms “ethnic” versus “national” minorities was due to a translation error; in Estonian, the two terms were interchangeable. In the debate about the teaching of minority languages, it was important to bear in mind that the Estonian population comprised over 100 different ethnic groups, 68 per cent of whom were ethnic Estonians. Throughout history, Estonian society had been multilingual. The most widely spoken languages were currently Estonian, Russian, English and Finnish. The number of German speakers had decreased considerably, although close cultural and commercial ties remained. Most members of minority groups used Russian as their main language. Therefore, schools of general education offered either Estonian or Russian as language of instruction; the schools had common curricula and subject syllabi, except for lessons in the mother tongue.

49. Since Estonia had regained its independence, ethnic organizations had actively affirmed the cultural identity of minority groups. Currently, over 300 local organizations engaged in activities to preserve the language and culture of ethnic minorities. Minority languages were being taught in 15 so-called “Sunday schools” and the Jewish secondary school in Tallinn had been functioning for 15 years. Language immersion programmes had been introduced in 37 schools of general education. The programmes sought to enable children to gain proficiency in the Estonian language, while also developing their mother tongue.

50. Foreign language syllabi had been brought into line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The objective was to raise students' cultural awareness and develop better mutual understanding, in recognition of the European dimension of education. In addition to foreign language classes in schools, cultural institutes and private institutions offered lessons for both children and adults.

51. The fees incurred for language lessons taken with a view to acquiring Estonian citizenship were reimbursed in full. Citizenship examinations were held in schools to ensure that graduates fulfilled all the requirements for obtaining citizenship status. In the context of programmes to promote the integration of stateless persons, which were being implemented with the support of the European Union Transition Facility Project, 10,000 citizenship applicants had received grants to attend Estonian language classes.

52. At present, Estonia was home to approximately 120,000 non-citizens, whose number was decreasing by 15,000 annually. A certain number of non-citizens holding Estonian identity documents resided abroad and possibly held Russian passports. However, the Russian Federation refused to disclose information on persons holding Russian citizenship.

53. Complementing information given about Russian-language media, he said that the number of children's programmes on Estonian national radio and Radio 4, which mainly served the Russian-speaking community, had doubled since 2000. Also, the number of radio programmes targeting the 15 to 29 year age bracket had been increased and programmes had been introduced that fostered positive attitudes towards ethnic minorities. On 13 July 2006, the Government had approved the merger of Estonian Television and the Estonian Radio, in a move which was expected to enhance access to information for the Russian-speaking community.

The meeting was suspended at 12.20 p.m. and resumed at 1 p.m.

54. Ms. HION (Estonia) said that Estonia had adopted a national action plan against trafficking in human persons in early 2006 as part of its obligations flowing from membership of the Nordic-Baltic Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings. Her Government cooperated actively with other Nordic and Baltic States in efforts to combat trafficking and had recently launched a project to facilitate the return and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking.

55. Estonia had signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. There had also been debate on the possible adoption of legislation criminalizing the purchase of sexual services. Recognizing the transnational nature of the crime of trafficking in persons, Estonia looked to other Nordic States such as Sweden and Finland for cooperation and guidance. Estonia had also participated in a regional seminar on trafficking convened in Moscow in June 2006. Practical measures to combat trafficking included the preparation and distribution of a handbook on trafficking in human persons for schoolchildren and the establishment of a helpline for victims of trafficking, which was operated by a local NGO.

56. In the context of efforts to combat the promotion of or incitement to racial hatred, Estonian judges and government officials were trained in the provisions of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The judicial training centre provided ongoing training for judges and prosecutors and a seminar had been held recently on issues arising in relation to the right to freedom of expression. The European Convention was invoked regularly in domestic court proceedings. Judges had sound knowledge of its provisions and efforts were being made to translate European Court of Human Rights case law into Estonian.

57. Mr. BOYD said that the conciliation process described by the delegation was an excellent alternative dispute resolution mechanism. However, when implementing the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, conciliation could only supplement, not replace, a formal judicial process.

58. Mr. YUTZIS (Country Rapporteur) commended the delegation for the nature and scope of its replies to Committee questions. He had particularly appreciated the delegation's efforts to explain the issues relating to the complex process of nation building. It appeared that, despite the Government's political will to progress, the question of language remained problematic. It was important to bear in mind that, rather than being an obstacle, recognition of minority languages could be a valuable tool in strengthening the social fabric of a society.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.