

FINLAND

CERD 26th No. 18 (A/8418) (1971)

28. From its 56th to its 58th meetings, the Committee proceeded to determine formally its view as a Committee (as distinct from the views expressed at previous meetings, which were those of the individual members) as to which reports were “satisfactory”, in the sense that they furnished all or most of the required information, and which reports were “unsatisfactory” or “incomplete” and therefore needed to be supplemented by further information. The initial report (and supplementary report, if any) of each State Party was put before the Committee separately by the Chairman. Where there was no consensus, the question whether a State Party’s report (or reports) was “satisfactory” or whether, failing that, the Committee wished to request additional information from that State Party, was decided by vote.

...

35. [At the fourth session] The reports submitted by the following six States Parties were considered “complete”, and the Committee decided not to request them to supply additional information: ... Finland ...

CERD 29th No.18 (A/9618) (1974)

108. Inasmuch as the second periodic report submitted by Finland indicated that no legislative measures had been taken since the submission of the initial report, the Committee's discussion centered around the administrative measures described in the report. The information on these measures showed that the Government of Finland continued to take steps to ensure the protection of racial minorities. It was regretted, however, that no information was provided on the way in which judicial cases in the sphere of race relations had been dealt with during the period covered by the report, although it was stated that "a couple" of such case had come before the courts.

109. Interest was shown in the so-called Lapp Parliament which the Government of Finland intended to establish; and questions were raised about the powers that would be conferred upon it, and whether it would be a body serving the Parliament of Finland in an advisory capacity or would be given statutory powers to take measures on behalf of the Lapps. Inquiries were made about measures relating to Gipsies, and about the achievements of a Gipsy Association which, according to the initial report submitted by Finland, had been formed to study the situation of the Gipsies.

110. The representative of the Government of Finland assured the Committee that his Government's replies to the questions put by its members would be transmitted to the Committee.

CERD A/31/18 + Corr.1 (1976)

43. The Committee noted that the third periodic report of Finland dealt only with certain legislative and administrative measures - as envisaged in article 1, paragraph 4, and required by article 2, paragraph 2, of the Convention - relating to the Lapps and the gipsies; all Committee members who participated in the consideration of the report welcomed those measures.

44. The Committee noted with regret (a) that the report under consideration furnished no information on the outcome of judicial proceedings relating to cases of alleged racial discrimination mentioned in the previous report, although such information had been requested by the Committee; and (b) that the information envisaged in general recommendation III was not supplied.

45. The following questions were asked by members of the Committee: (a) Was the Lapp delegation, described in the report under consideration, the same body as the projected Lapp Parliament, mentioned in the preceding report? (b) What was the mandate and competence of the Gipsy Association, mentioned in the initial report of Finland, and what were its activities? (c) Why were the gipsies opposed to the publication of an elementary manual in the gipsy language? (d) What measures, particularly in education, had the Finnish Government taken - as envisaged in article 7 of the Convention - to promote feelings of tolerance towards gipsies and their way of life among other members of the population? (e) Were there any "integrationist multiracial organizations and movements", as envisaged in article 2, paragraph 1 (e), of the Convention, aimed at integrating the Lapps and the gipsies in Finnish society? And, if so, were they receiving assistance from the Government?

46. The representative of the Government of Finland informed the Committee that her Government did maintain diplomatic relations with South Africa but that it condemned the practice of apartheid and contributed to the United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa, the United Nation Fund for Namibia and similar institutions. She confirmed that the Lapp delegation performed the same functions as the projected Lapp Parliament mentioned in her Government's second report. She assured the Committee that the other inquiries and questions, mentioned in the two preceding paragraphs, would be forwarded to her Government.

CERD A/33/18 (1978)

143. The information contained in the fourth periodic report of Finland was considered by the Committee together with the supplementary information given by the representative of the reporting State in his introductory statement. Both the report and the statement responded to the inquiries and requests for additional information made by the Committee during its consideration of the third periodic report of Finland (A/31/18 and Corr.1, paras. 43-46).

144. The detailed information concerning the conditions of, and the measures affecting, the Lapps and the Gipsies was noted.

145. While the statistical information concerning cases of racial discrimination brought before the courts was noted, a desire for receiving information on the nature of the complaints and the outcome of the proceedings was expressed. The representative of Finland, recalling that information on the first case had been given to the Committee in his Government's initial report, stated that information on the remaining cases would be submitted in the next report.

146. In connection with the detailed information concerning relations with the racist regimes in southern Africa, the representative of Finland was asked why his Government was maintaining a charge d'affaires in Pretoria and why economic and trade relations between private companies in Finland and South Africa had not been prohibited. He replied that a charge d'affaires was maintained in South Africa mainly because there were Finns living there; he observed, however, that his Government did not use diplomatic recognition as a political means of expressing its opinion of a particular government, because it recognized States, not governments. With regard to the implementation of General Assembly recommendations on economic and trade relations, he stated that legal action by his Government would have to be based on mandatory decisions of the Security Council.

147. Further information on the implementation of article 7 of the Convention, supplementing the information contained in the report under consideration, was requested. The representative of Finland acknowledged that the information in question was brief and said that the next report would contain more information in that respect.

CERD A/35/18 (1980)

190. The fifth periodic report of Finland (CERD/C/50/Add.3) was considered by the Committee together with the information given by the representative of the reporting State in his introductory statement and the texts of the two court decisions given in cases of racial discrimination in 1975 in response to the request of the Committee.

191. Members of the Committee expressed satisfaction at the report which was considered to be very comprehensive reflecting the intentions of the Government of Finland to implement all aspects of the Convention and taking into account its willingness to maintain a constructive dialogue with the Committee.

192. The Committee focused attention in particular on the question of the Lapp and the Gipsy ethnic minorities. It noted that considerable progress had been made in the social status of these groups and considered that the Government of Finland had acted in an exemplary fashion in consulting those directly concerned. Members of the Committee, however, asked for further statistical information on the subject, the school programmes and objectives of the University of Lapland in the light of the needs of the Lapp community and also on the influence of the environment on the university programmes. A member inquired whether the Lapps had customary law and, if so, whether the faculty of law offered courses in Lapp law, as happened in some American universities which offered courses in Indian law. With regard to the efforts made to raise the social status of the Lapps and the Gipsies, other members asked whether the Lapps, having been given access to higher education, could aspire to appointments outside Lapland and be gradually integrated into national life.

193. Some members pointed out that the Sailors' Act of 1978 was to be welcomed since it reflected a measure to implement article 2 of the Convention. A member, however, expressed the opinion that, if it had been found necessary to enact a law against racial discrimination in that specific occupation, it might be inferred that similar discrimination might exist also in other occupations. With regard to the question of refugees, the members asked for clarification of the social and political rights of refugees, their living conditions, as well as statistical and other available information showing the number of students from South Africa in Finland and how many students from southern Africa had been awarded scholarships by the Finnish Government.

194. With regard to the implementation of article 3 of the Convention, the Committee welcomed measures which were adopted by Finland in accordance with resolution 418 (1977) of the Security Council concerning the mandatory arms embargo against South Africa, and the fact that Finland was contributing to the United Nations funds set up to support the struggle against apartheid. Some members of the Committee asked for further information concerning relations with South Africa and, in particular, whether Finland was still represented by a charge d'affaires in Pretoria.

195. With respect to article 5 of the Convention, it was emphasized that the report of Finland did not contain sufficient information on the implementation of the provisions of this article which was of capital importance, particularly as regards the enactment of legislation to implement paragraphs

(d) (ii) to (d) (vi) and paragraph (e) of that article. Further information in this connection was requested in the next periodic report.

196. With reference to cases of racial discrimination referred to in annex 4 of the report, the Committee was pleased to note that the relevant penal provisions had been applied and that the persons guilty of discriminatory acts had been punished. A member noted, however, that in the two cases mentioned in the present report as well as in the cases mentioned in the fourth report of Finland, the offenders had been ordered to pay fines. He wondered whether there was a tendency to avoid the sentence of imprisonment provided for in the Penal Code, and inquired, furthermore, what would happen if a person ordered to pay a fine was unable to pay and whether the victims of the acts of racial discrimination had received compensation.

197. The Committee noted with satisfaction that the Government of Finland was taking appropriate measures to implement the provisions of article 7 of the Convention, particularly in the planning of the curricula of comprehensive schools. The Handbook for International Education, appended to the report, was one that could serve as an example to other States. A member pointed out that the emphasis in Finland seemed to be on promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations rather than on combating prejudices which might lead to racial discrimination; in his opinion, prejudice should be fought in the schools, and it would be desirable to modify action against racial discrimination at the educational level accordingly.

198. The representative of Finland, commenting on questions concerning ethnic minorities, said that the Lapps were more anxious to preserve their traditions than were the Gipsies, since they lived in a homogenous region which provided ecological support for their culture, whereas the Gipsies were more integrated in society and were scattered over different regions of the country. The University of Lapland was designed to meet the needs of the whole territory of Lapland, not only the needs of the Lapp population.

199. Answering a question concerning relations with South Africa, the representative said that trade with South Africa represented only a very small percentage of Finland's total trade and the Government could not forbid private companies from trading with South Africa, for the companies were free to choose their trading partners. He also pointed out that at a meeting held in Helsinki, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Nordic countries had reaffirmed their condemnation of the régime of apartheid and had undertaken to pursue their programme of action against South Africa. Finland was firmly opposed to the régime of apartheid in South Africa and the fact that it maintained a charge d'affaires at Pretoria in no way signified approval of the régime.

200. With regard to the question concerning penalties for acts of racial discrimination, he stated that they depended on the gravity of the offence. As yet, there had been no claim for compensation in such cases.

201. Regarding the new Sailors Act of 1978, he said that the recruitment of crews for service on Finnish ships was very international and therefore raised problems of possible discriminatory treatment which had to be prevented.

202. The representative declared that in its next report his Government would reply to all the questions that had been asked and would also provide the information requested by members of the Committee on the implementation of the rights set forth in article 5 of the Convention.

CERD A/37/18 (1982)

404. The sixth periodic report of Finland (CERD/C/76/Add.4) was introduced by the representative of the reporting State who elaborated on certain points of the report and submitted detailed information regarding the implementation of article 3 of the Convention and the status of refugees living in Finland. With regard to article 3 of the Convention, he stressed that Finland continued to propagate the application of increased international pressure against the system of apartheid, including sanctions by the United Nations Security Council in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter. For its part, long before the mandatory arms embargo, Finland had voluntarily refrained from exporting arms to South Africa according to the Security Council recommendation to that effect, and had acted together with other Nordic countries in accordance with the Joint Nordic Programme of Action against South Africa. Since 1973 it had annually given humanitarian assistance to the victims of the policy of apartheid through the various United Nations funds and annually assisted the South African liberation movements through the OAU Liberation Committee. It had also decided to contribute to the Programme of Co-operation of the Independent Countries of Southern Africa in order to lessen their economic dependence on South Africa. Referring to the situation of refugees, he described the administrative set-up dealing with it as well as the measures taken by the Government to facilitate their integration into society, particularly in terms of education and housing.

405. The Government of Finland was commended for its stand in the struggle against racial discrimination and, in particular, the racist régime in South Africa.

406. The Committee welcomed the efforts made by Finland with respect to the Sami population, in particular in the socio-economic field, and it was noted with satisfaction that the term “Lapp” had finally been replaced by the word “Sami” which had no derogatory connotations. It was asked how far the drafting work to renew the Reindeer Breeding Act had reached, and information was requested concerning the efforts of the working group for drafting educational legislation mentioned in the report and what had happened to their proposals.

407. With respect to the education of the gypsy population, it was asked why it had been necessary to renew the provisions of the Penal Code relating to discrimination and incitement to discrimination in 1974. In that connection, the Government was requested to provide the text of the new law in its next report. While complimenting Finland on the measures it had taken with respect to gypsies and the Samis, a member wondered whether the special protection given to such people might not lead to segregation and the maintenance of an inferior standard of living by removing any incentive they might have to integrate with the rest of society.

408. Noting that no mention of the Swedish minority had been made in the reports of Finland, some members wondered whether there were any regulations governing the use of Swedish in Finland, in the administration, in education or in judicial proceedings. If there were such regulations, it was asked why they had not been mentioned in the report. If no such regulations existed, the reason was asked for their absence.

409. With regard to article 4 of the Convention, a member noted that since articles 6 (a) and (b) of chapter 16 of the Penal Code, as contained in the initial report, seemed to cover the most basic acts of racial discrimination, he was puzzled by the statement that such discrimination was also likely to occur.

410. As to article 5 of the Convention, it was asked whether there was a policy of favouring naturalization in Finland and what were the obstacles which might prevent the issuance of a passport. Referring to the fifth periodic report of Finland (CERD/C/50/Add.3), a member wondered why the Sailor's Act of June 1978 (No. 423/78) should contain a provision stating that the employer should treat his employees impartially so that no one was discriminated against and why it was at all necessary to have a special law for seafarers.

411. With reference to article 6 of the Convention, further information was requested on the ombudsman, specifically as to how he was selected and how he could have an effect. In particular, it would be useful if the contents of the ombudsman's report to the Government were made available to the Committee.

412. The representative of Finland replied to some of the questions raised by the Committee. With respect to the Sami population, he said that the Working Group entrusted with the drafting of educational legislation for that population had submitted its proposal in 1981, but the proposal had in all probability not yet been acted upon. Referring to the comment made that over-protection of Samis and gypsies could lead to segregation rather than integration, he suggested that a distinction should be made between discrimination on account of one's racial background and favourable treatment intended to bring about equality before the law and that special assistance should indeed be accorded to minorities which had hitherto been underprivileged. Replying to questions concerning the Swedish minority, he noted that, although that minority had remained more or less constant at the figure of 300,000 the proportion had fallen to between 6 and 7 per cent of the total population and he pointed out that Swedish was one of the two official languages of Finland.

413. As to the question of seafarer's legislation, he said that the selection of that particular sector of the Finnish economy for legislation had to be seen in light of an exceptional international recruiting process which was at times reacted against by the protectors of the interests of Finnish workers who tended to advocate the recruitment of Finnish seafarers on Finnish vessels. In answer to the question as to what obstacles might prevent the issuance of a passport, he cited the examples of criminal cases in which police clearance would have to be sought before a defendant could leave the country, and the case of young boys about to enter military service; if the timing was not correct, the police would not issue the clearance required for securing a passport. He noted, however, that those instances had nothing to do with discrimination as defined in the Convention. Regarding the acquisition of Finnish citizenship, he explained that there was no clear policy favouring naturalization, but his country welcomed people who wished to obtain Finnish citizenship and had no reason to object to that. In conclusion, he assured the Committee of his Government's full co-operation and said that he would communicate all comments and questions made by members of the Committee to his Government for consideration when the next report was prepared.

CERD A/39/18 (1984)

492. The seventh periodic report of Finland (CERD/C/107/Add.3) was considered by the Committee together with the introductory statement made by the representative of the reporting State. She informed the Committee about some new developments aimed at strengthening the provisions of the Convention, especially some measures taken to enhance the living conditions of the Samis and the Romany population, the two ethnic minorities in Finland.

493. The Committee congratulated the Finnish Government for its comprehensive and satisfactory report and for its successful efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

494. With reference to the implementation of article 1, paragraph 4, and article 2, paragraph 2, members commended the Government's interest in the welfare of the small minorities. However, they requested further details on the type of opportunities afforded to the Finnish minorities to exchange their culture with the minorities of other Nordic countries as well as any measures taken to help the Sami communities retain their language and culture. It was asked whether many Finnish emigrants to Sweden including gypsies had returned to Finland and to what extent and at what level the ethnic minorities participated in the central Government. Information was also requested about the Swedish minority living in Finland. The Committee hoped to receive the Romany history text book and the book on Romany traditions when they were issued, in order better to understand the Romany people. A demographic breakdown of the population of Finland as well as the conclusions and recommendations of the investigation of the historical rights of the Samis to land were also requested.

495. With reference to article 3, members noted with satisfaction that, in general, the Finnish Government maintained no relations with South Africa and condemned apartheid. Further clarification was requested, however, on whether diplomatic relations were still maintained, whether Finland had any investments in South Africa and Namibia and what attitude the Finnish Government had adopted on the question of Namibia.

496. With respect to the implementation of article 4, members of the Committee inquired whether the relevant articles of the Penal Code which referred to persons also applied to organizations. It was asked whether the fines and sentences referred to in the report had been implemented or whether the sentences had been suspended. The Committee reiterated its interest in receiving the contents of the Ombudsman's report to the Government.

497. Replying to questions raised by members of the Committee, the representative of Finland stated that the Swedish-speaking population did not constitute a different racial group. She also pointed out that Swedish was one of the two official languages by virtue of the Constitution. Concerning minority languages, she said that, of the three Sami dialects, Northern Sami was being developed through Nordic co-operation since that dialect was also spoken in Sweden and Norway. She added that an agreement had been passed in 1979 on a uniform spelling for teaching the dialect in schools. Concerning the migratory movements of gypsies, she said that, while there were statistics regarding people returning to Finland, they did not give an ethnic breakdown, since all

Finns were regarded as having the same rights and duties.

498. Regarding the political rights of the Sami and Romany groups, she said that, in accordance with the Constitution, all Finns were equal before the law, whatever group they might belong to, and that they were well represented in local and communal government there.

499. With reference to the implementation of article 3, the representative stated that Finland observed the sanctions adopted by the Security Council, and had given details in previous reports about the joint Nordic Programme of Action against South Africa. While Finland did have diplomatic relations at the chargé d'affaires level, that did not imply Finland's support for the apartheid regime, but was intended to safeguard the rights of any Finns who might be resident in South Africa and as a means of prevailing upon the South African Government to discontinue its apartheid policy.

500. With regard to article 4, she said that the Finnish Societies' Act prohibited the forming of societies whose aims were contrary to good morals and to the law, which included the laws on racial discrimination. Under the Act such societies could be dissolved.

501. In response to the question whether the fines or sentences provided for under the Penal Code had been duly imposed, she said that all such penalties had been implemented. However, it was possible to appeal to higher courts of justice.

502. The representative reaffirmed the readiness of her Government to continue co-operating with the Committee and assured its members that their request would be taken into account in the next report of Finland.

CERD A/42/18 (1987)

160. The eighth periodic report of Finland (CERD/C/132/Add.1) was considered by the Committee at its 757th meeting on 7 March 1986 (CERD/C/SR.757).

161. The report was introduced by the representative of Finland, who highlighted parts of the report dealing with the Sami and Romany populations. He also informed the Committee of the measures contained in the New Joint Programme of Action against South Africa of the Nordic Countries as well as of their increased humanitarian assistance to refugees and liberation movements in southern Africa.

162. Members of the Committee welcomed the fact that the Finnish Government continued to carry out its policy designed to guarantee its citizens fundamental rights without discrimination. They said that the dialogue between the Committee and the Finnish Government was an exemplary one. It was also noted that Finland had found an excellent solution to the problem, faced by many countries, of conflicts associated with linguistic differences.

163. With regard to the implementation of article 2, additional information was requested concerning former Sami reindeer herders who had become wage-earners and the social and economic situation of the Samis living in cities; it was also asked whether the Sami Commission had considered the Swedish example of appointing an ombudsman to protect Sami interest.

164. Regarding the estimated Romany population, members observed that there was a wide margin of error in the statistics. Information was requested as to how the Finnish Government intended to integrate Gypsies into the mainstream of society and enable them to share in the high Finnish standard of living.

165. Clarifications were sought as to whether social, cultural and economic rights were fully extended to permanent residents of Finland who were not citizens of that country. Members also wished to receive information regarding measures to prohibit discrimination in the labour market on the basis of ethnic origin, assist migrant workers and members of minority groups in the area of education, and promote acceptance of refugees and counter xenophobia. Information was also requested concerning the ethnic background of Muslim minorities living in Finland as well as their place in Finnish society.

166. As to the implementation of article 3, members of the Committee noted that Finland had significantly reduced its South African imports and welcomed the activities carried out by Finland in conjunction with the other Nordic countries. They requested additional information about the national measures aimed at further restricting economic and other relations with South Africa. They would also welcome information regarding Finland's diplomatic and military relations with the Government of South Africa. The hope was expressed that the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions would be fully implemented and that Finland would sever all ties with South Africa.

167. In relation to article 7, it was pointed out that the Finnish people were fully aware of the content of human rights instruments and that the media devoted a considerable amount of time to news about the situation in South Africa.

168. It was asked whether Finland was considering making the optional declaration under article 14 of the Convention.

169. Replying to questions raised by members of the Committee, the representative of Finland said that there were several reasons why only approximate figures could be supplied regarding the Romany population. For one thing, while some Gypsies were settled in particular areas, there was still a great deal of movement throughout Finland as well as across the open borders into other Nordic Countries.

170. As for the Sami population, reindeer farming continued to be the main source of livelihood, although a degree of economic diversification had taken place in recent years and Samis were now engaged in such fields as tourism. By tradition, the Samis tended to remain in the rural areas of northern Finland and were not generally found in the urban environment. As a result, they did not face problems of social or economic adaptation.

171. The question of refugees was currently a topic of considerable discussion at the governmental level. Finland's policy was perhaps not as liberal as that of some of the other Nordic countries. Nevertheless, the number of refugees admitted to Finland had certainly increased in recent times and refugees were not being turned away. The authorities were giving thought to ways of increasing Finland's participation in relief efforts for refugees, and the trend was towards liberalization of entry requirements.

172. The labour market in Finland was freely accessible and the idea of a common labour market was one of the economic pillars of the Nordic countries. Work permits were required, of course, and, once granted, the rights of the persons concerned were fully guaranteed. The granting of such permits was necessarily subject to economic considerations, but racial factors did not play a role. The text of the statute reproduced in the report regulating work agreements was certainly meant to apply to discrimination on racial grounds in employment matters. There was indeed a small Muslim population, probably no more than a few hundred, living chiefly in the Helsinki area. Specific information about the ethnic background of that population could be supplied in the next periodic report.

173. Turning to questions raised by the members of the Committee in relation to apartheid and the situation in southern Africa, the representative of Finland indicated that more detailed information about the measures put into effect recently would be made available in due course. For the time being, however, he could assure the Committee that the main purpose of such action was to reduce Finland's links with South Africa. Some of the measures, such as those regarding credits, were mandatory in nature, while others were intended to encourage importers to seek alternative sources of supply voluntarily. On the diplomatic level, the Finnish Government continued to maintain low-level representation in Pretoria, where it had one career diplomat serving as *chargé d'affaires*. No change in that regard was envisaged in the foreseeable future, but it was felt that such

representation in no way helped to support the apartheid régime; rather, it was a practical arrangement for bringing the Finnish Government's views on apartheid directly to the attention of the South African authorities.

CERD A/45/18 (1990)

87. The ninth and tenth periodic reports of Finland (CERD/C/159/Add.1 and CERD/C/185/Add.1, respectively) were considered by the Committee at its 866th and 867th meetings, held on 8 August 1990 (CERD/C/SR.866 and SR.867).

88. The periodic reports were introduced by the representative of the State party, who pointed out that, like the previous reports, the tenth report dealt essentially with the measures taken by the Government of Finland to improve the living conditions of the country's two ethnic minorities - the Samis and the Romanies (or Gypsies). He informed the Committee of developments since the tenth periodic report had been prepared, and stated in particular that in May 1990 Finland had ratified the European Convention on Human Rights, and that the Nordic Sami Council had recently been granted consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

89. With regard to article 2 of the Convention, he said the Committee set up to consider amendments to the electoral law had proposed that a new provision should be added to the Constitution under which Parliamentary committees would be required to hear Sami representatives whenever they considered bills relating to the rights of the Sami minority. The Advisory Board for Sami Affairs had completed the general bill on the rights of Samis and had proposed that it be adopted. The representative of the State party also informed the Committee of other legislative and administrative measures concerning the Samis and the Romanies. With regard to article 3 of the Convention, he pointed out that, on 25 March 1990, Finland had lifted all sanctions affecting Namibia, following that country's accession to independence. As far as articles 4 and 5 of the Convention were concerned, he said that the bill relating to a new criminal offence of discrimination had been submitted to Parliament and that the law amending the legislation on breach of authority had been adopted and promulgated.

90. Members of the Committee observed that the two periodic reports submitted by the Government of Finland were in conformity with the guidelines given by the Committee and provided detailed information that testified to an improvement in the living conditions of the two national minorities. However, they inquired whether persons who were not Finnish citizens enjoyed the same rights, and asked for details on the status of immigrants and refugees with regard to employment. Noting that, pursuant to a recent agreement with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Finland now received Soviet Jews leaving for Israel, they asked whether, once they reached Finland, such emigrants could decide to stay there and obtain refugee status and whether they were free to choose a destination other than Israel. Members also inquired: whether it was possible to invoke the provisions of the Convention before the courts when they had not previously been incorporated into legislation; what language was used in the courts; and whether Finland possessed a single national language or whether Swedish could also be used. They sought additional information on demographic trends in Finland, particularly with respect to immigrants, and the possible impact on employment, social welfare, housing and education of an increase in the immigrant population.

91. With regard to the implementation of article 2 of the Convention, some members of the

Committee observed that, in order to be able to gain a clearer idea of the situation of the Samis and the Romanies in relation to the remainder of the Finnish population, they would require comparative data on rates of school enrolment, access to health care, the rate of unemployment, infant mortality, life expectancy, juvenile delinquency and employment in the civil service and the professions. Members were concerned that language should be the sole criterion for determining whether or not a person belonged to the Sami population. They wanted to know why the Samis and the Romanies were treated differently in that respect. The view was expressed that such determination should be based on self-identification by the individuals concerned. Members also asked: whether there was a special quota in the civil service for minorities, such as the Samis or the Romanies; whether the Finnish Constitution contained any provision for representation of minorities in Parliament or the Government; and whether the Swedish-speaking population was considered a distinct ethnic or racial minority. Members also requested further information concerning: the new law on the rights of the Samis; the proposed reform of the Penal Code; the Reindeer Management Bill; and legislation on the use of the national languages in the field of health and social welfare.

92. With regard to the implementation of article 3 of the Convention, members noted that, although Finland had adopted a large number of measures against apartheid, it still maintained diplomatic relations with South Africa and asked for details of the type of pressure applied by the Government of Finland to combat apartheid. They also wished to know whether there had been any amendment to the 1985 Act on measures against South Africa and whether Finland had resumed a programme of assistance to Namibia on a large scale.

93. With reference to article 4 of the Convention, members expressed the wish for more information on legislative measures aimed at preventing the emergence of organizations advocating racial discrimination and on action the Government planned to take if such organizations were established.

94. As far as the implementation of article 5 of the Convention was concerned, members of the Committee asked whether any cases of racial discrimination had been brought before the courts since 1986. They also requested details of the manner in which Finland was implementing article 5 of the Convention..

95. Regarding article 7 of the Convention, members asked for further details on measures in the field of education with a view to combating racial prejudice.

96. The representative of the reporting State, replying to the questions raised by the members of the Committee, explained that all foreigners resident in Finland basically enjoyed the same rights as Finnish citizens in the political, social, cultural and other fields, but their economic activities were restricted to a certain extent. Furthermore, the right to vote was thus far only enjoyed by foreigners who were citizens of a Nordic country. However, legislation was in preparation to extend that right to other foreigners. Regarding the emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union, he pointed out that it had always been Finland's position that all Jews from that country should be free to choose their country of destination. Finnish citizens of Swedish mother tongue accounted for some 5 per cent to 6 per cent of the total population. Both Swedish and Finnish were national and

official languages.

97. Replying to the questions raised in connection with article 2 of the Convention, the representative of the reporting State indicated that the question of the rights of the Samis with respect to land ownership and utilization was dealt with in both periodic reports. He drew particular attention in that regard to paragraphs 12 and 13 of the ninth periodic report. With reference to Nordic co-operation on Sami affairs, he stated that regular meetings were held between senior officials of the Nordic countries to discuss Sami affairs within the framework of the relevant Nordic institutions and with the participation of Sami representative bodies. Concerning the definition of the Sami group, he explained that the Finnish Government's definition had been formulated in accordance with the wishes of the Samis themselves and that, in all Nordic countries, the criterion defining the Samis was their language. No such criterion was applied to the Romanies, since most of them no longer spoke their mother tongue. Indeed, the position of the Romanies' language was extremely weak and the Government of Finland was doing everything in its power to enhance its status.

98. With regard to the questions raised in connection with article 3 of the Convention, the representative of the reporting State said that Finland retained a chargé d'affaires in Pretoria and that no changes in its representation were envisaged in the near future.

99. Noting, in conclusion, that some of the issues raised by members of the Committee were too complex to be answered immediately, the representative of Finland assured the Committee that replies to all these questions would be included in Finland's next periodic report.

CERD A/51/18 (1996)

167. The Committee considered the eleventh and twelfth periodic reports of Finland (CERD/C/240/Add.2) at its 1141st and 1142nd meetings (see CERD/C/SR.1141-1142), held on 5 and 6 March 1996, and at its 1154th meeting, held on 14 March 1996, adopted the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

168. The Committee notes with appreciation the State Party's readiness to continue a dialogue with the Committee. It regrets that the eleventh and twelfth reports were not submitted on time. The Committee also expresses its appreciation to the State Party's delegation for the additional information that it provided during its oral presentation.

B. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention

169. Since the mid-1980s, Finland has been facing important demographic changes. It is noted that the number of foreigners has more than tripled over the past few years. It is also noted that Finland is facing difficulties in the current period of structural change and economic recession. As observed by the Government, implementation of the Convention may also be made more difficult in some areas by decentralization policies, severe unemployment and budgetary cuts.

C. Positive aspects

170. It is noted that the Government of Finland has taken, especially since the beginning of the 1990s, several positive measures to combat various forms of racial discrimination. The establishment of the Advisory Board for Refugee and Migrant Affairs, the ratification of the European Charter for Regional Minority Languages (1994) and the creation of a working group to draw up a programme of action against racism and discrimination (1996) are just a few of the proactive steps that Finland has taken.

171. Recent legal reforms of the Constitutional framework and Penal Code, on matters related directly to racial discrimination, are welcomed.

172. The Government's initiative in establishing a dialogue with the non-governmental sector is appreciated. It is noted that this dialogue resulted in the cooperative drafting of the eleventh and twelfth periodic reports of Finland. The efforts undertaken by the Government to promote public debate on questions and problems relating to racial discrimination are welcome initiatives.

173. It is noted with satisfaction that the State Party has made a declaration under article 14, paragraph 1, of the Convention, recognizing the competence of the Committee to receive communications from individuals. The fact that Finland has ratified the amendments to article 8, paragraph 6, of the Convention is welcomed.

D. Principal subjects of concern

174. Concern is expressed that article 4 of the Convention has not yet been fully implemented.

175. The recent, significant increase in racially motivated acts and violence is a matter of deep concern. The persistence of publications, organizations and political parties which promote racist and xenophobic ideas is a further serious worry. It is regretted that there is no law which prohibits or punishes racist organizations for activities which promote and incite racial discrimination. Proposed reforms of the Constitution and of the Penal Code seem not to comply fully with the spirit and provisions of articles 2 and 4 of the Convention.

176. It is noted that victims of racial discrimination must overcome significant obstacles in order to obtain adequate judicial remedies.

177. As regards the land rights of the Sami people, concern is expressed over the mining and other economic interests of national and international companies which may be threatening the way of life of Samis.

178. Concern is also expressed over the Sami people's participation in the Sami parliament in their mother tongue.

179. The difficulties which the Romany minority continues to experience in exercising its rights is a matter of concern. The high rate at which Romany children drop out from school is also cause for concern.

180. It is noted with concern that educational programmes contain insufficient information on human rights issues, especially on minority rights issues.

181. There is no wide distribution of the text of the Convention in Finland. This practice differs from the Government's policy of distributing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Finnish language.

182. The current refugee policies do not fully take into account all of the provisions of the Convention. In some cases, decisions to repatriate asylum-seekers have been taken without proper respect for international human rights standards and the norms of refugee law. Concern is likewise expressed over the criteria employed in granting residence permits to foreigners.

183. Also a matter of concern is the discrimination against ethnic minorities and foreigners which occurs within the labour market.

184. Concern is expressed about the training of law enforcement officials in the protection of human rights in the light of the Committee's General Recommendation XIII.

185. Another matter of concern is the denial of access to public places for some persons, on the basis of ethnic or national origins.

E. Suggestions and recommendations

186. In order to combat racist and xenophobic attitudes and violence, the Committee recommends that the State Party take all appropriate measures to implement fully articles 2 and 4 of the Convention. It also recommends that Finland adopt legislation which clearly prohibits and punishes acts of racial discrimination and organizations that promote and incite such racial discrimination.

187. The Committee recommends that the constitutional and penal reforms in Finland, to the extent to which they concern racial discrimination, more fully reflect the provisions of the Convention.

188. The Committee also recommends that the Government ensure thorough investigation of cases involving alleged mistreatment of persons belonging to ethnic minorities and foreign persons by the police. Detailed information on complaints and sentences regarding acts of racial or ethnic discrimination would be useful.

189. The Committee suggests that the Government draft and implement a clear policy on Sami land rights in order better to protect and preserve the way of life of this minority group. The Committee also recommends that the Government ratify ILO Convention No. 169.

190. The Committee recommends that the State Party do all in its power to enable Sami children to pursue their studies at the primary and secondary levels in their mother tongue.

191. The Committee also suggests that special measures be taken on behalf of the Romany people to ensure their full and equal enjoyment of human rights, especially in the field of education.

192. In order to fight discrimination more efficiently, the Committee recommends that special attention be paid in schools to human rights issues and especially to minority issues.

193. The Committee strongly recommends that the Government take the Convention fully into account when considering policies and/or decisions on asylum-seekers and refugees.

194. The Committee recommends that appropriate action be taken to ensure that access to places or services intended for use by the general public is not denied on grounds of national or ethnic origin, contrary to article 5 (f) of the Convention.

195. The Committee further suggests that the State Party ensure the wide dissemination of the text of the Convention, as well as of the report, the summary records and the concluding observations adopted thereon. The accepted individual communications procedure under article 14 of the Convention should be widely publicized throughout Finland for the benefit of the general public.

196. The Committee recommends that the State Party's next periodic report, due in August 1995, be an updating report, and that it address the matters raised in these concluding observations.

CERD A/54/18 (1999)

67. The Committee considered the thirteenth and fourteenth periodic reports of Finland (CERD/C/320/Add.2) at its 1309th and 1310th meetings (see CERD/C/SR.1309 and 1310), on 3 and 4 March 1999, and adopted, at its 1326th meeting (see CERD/C/SR.1326), on 16 March 1999, the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

68. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State party has submitted a detailed and comprehensive report which complies with the Committee's general guidelines and addresses the different issues raised by the Committee in its previous concluding observations. The Committee also appreciates the additional information provided by the State party's delegation during its oral presentation, as well as the constructive dialogue that the Government of Finland maintains with the Committee.

Positive aspects

69. It is noted with satisfaction that since the examination of its eleventh and twelfth periodic reports, the State party has taken further measures to combat racial discrimination. At the regional level, Finland has ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe. At the national level, a Ministerial Group on Good Ethnic Relations and an Anti-Racism Committee have been established. The Council of State adopted the Decision-in-Principle on Measures for Promoting Tolerance and Combating Racism, which was preceded by the Action Plan against Racism, as well as the Decision-in-Principle for the Government Programme on Immigration and Refugee Policy. In addition, a new Act on the integration of immigrants and reception of asylum seekers has been drafted, as well as amendments to the Aliens' Act providing immigrants, *inter alia*, with an extended right of appeal and facilitating the reunification of families.

70. The large representation of immigrant groups and traditional national minorities in the new Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations as well as their participation in the Commission against Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Intolerance is also welcomed.

71. The recent legislation ensuring enjoyment by immigrant children of their right to education, as well as the measures taken to facilitate education of immigrants in their own language, are welcomed. Measures to facilitate the education of the Sami and Roma people in their own language are similarly welcomed.

72. Preparations for the establishment of the post of an Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination to replace the Ombudsman for Aliens are also welcomed.

73. It is noted with satisfaction that the State party shares many of the Committee's concerns and that non-governmental organizations were given the opportunity to send written statements for the

preparation of the thirteenth and fourteenth periodic reports of Finland.

C. Principal subjects of concern

74. Concern is expressed at the growing number of racist acts occurring in the country, a fact recognized by the State party itself. Despite this increase, in relatively few instances have judicial proceedings been initiated with respect to incidents of racial discrimination, including those in the labour market.

75. The Committee expresses its concern that article 4 of the Convention is not fully complied with, since there is no provision in the Finnish legislation prohibiting and punishing organizations which promote and incite racial discrimination. Moreover, the Penal Code contains no provision declaring any dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred to be an offence punishable by law.

76. It is regretted that the question of land ownership of the Sami has not yet been settled and that, as a result, Finland has not yet ratified ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.

77. Concern is also expressed over the situation of immigrants and the Roma minority, particularly with respect to housing, the high rate of unemployment and education problems.

78. Incidents involving denial of access to public places for some persons on the basis of their ethnic or national origin, contrary to article 5 (f) of the Convention, continue to be a matter of concern.

Suggestions and recommendations

79. The Committee recommends the amendment of the Penal Code in order to fully implement article 4 of the Convention. The Code should, in particular, contain provisions declaring illegal and prohibiting organizations which promote and incite racial discrimination, as well as declaring the dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, an offence punishable by law. Due consideration should be given in this respect to the Committee's general recommendation VII relating to the implementation of article 4 of the Convention.

80. The Committee recommends that the State party redouble its efforts towards the resolution of the land dispute concerning the Sami as soon as possible, in a manner that does justice to the claims of the Sami.

81. Additional measures should be taken at the State and municipal levels to alleviate the situation of the Roma minority and of immigrants with respect to housing, employment and education.

82. In accordance with article 5 (f) of the Convention, appropriate action should be taken to ensure that access to places or services intended for use by the general public is not denied to any person on grounds of national or ethnic origin.

83. Efforts should be made to increase the number of quota refugees. It is recommended that the quota system be applied without discrimination based on race or ethnic origin.

84. The State party is requested to provide information, in its next periodic report, on the extent to which members of vulnerable groups are in practice protected from the forms of discrimination listed in the Convention. Information should also be provided on cases concerning individuals who have been prosecuted for acts of racism, including membership in or collaboration with racist organizations or groups, as well as on compensation provided to victims of racial discrimination, especially in the labour market.

85. Furthermore, the next periodic report should also contain information on measures taken and progress achieved concerning the implementation of the Decision-in-Principle on Measures for Promoting Tolerance and Combating Racism.

86. The Committee invites the State party to make its report and the Committee's concluding observations and summary records thereon widely available in Finland. The possibility of holding a seminar in this respect is welcomed. The accepted individual communications procedure under article 14 of the Convention should also be widely publicized.

87. The Committee recommends that the State party's next periodic report, due on 13 August 1999, be an updating report, and that it address the matters raised in the present concluding observations.

CERD A/55/18 (2000)

204. The Committee considered the fifteenth periodic report of Finland (CERD/C/363/Add.2), at its 1403rd and 1404th meetings (CERD/C/SR.1403-1404), held on 1 and 2 August 2000. At its 1414th meeting (CERD/C/SR.1414), held on 9 August 2000, it adopted the following concluding observations.

1. Introduction

205. The Committee welcomes the detailed and comprehensive report of the State party, which in an open and self-critical manner addresses the different issues raised in the Committee's previous concluding observations. The Committee also expresses its appreciation for the additional information provided in oral and written form and for the frank and constructive dialogue with the State party's delegation.

2. Positive aspects

206. The Committee notes the legislative measures adopted by the State party with a view to combating racial discrimination, including the new Constitution, the new Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum-Seekers and the Personal Data Act, the amendment of the Aliens Act, and the revision of the legislation concerning education.

207. The Committee welcomes the efforts made by the State party to establish an institutionalized system for protection against racial discrimination and promotion of rights of minorities, mainly Sami and Roma.

208. The Committee notes with interest the proposal for a governmental National Programme of Action against Ethnic Discrimination and Racism in order to enhance good ethnic relations and prevent ethnic discrimination and racism in Finnish society.

209. The Committee welcomes the number of in-depth studies undertaken on ethnic relations, in particular on Finnish attitudes towards immigrants, ethnic groups and ethnic discrimination at work.

210. The Committee notes with interest that anti-racist projects have been implemented also at the regional and local levels, in particular the Finnish Romako joint project to raise the education level of the Roma and prevent their social exclusion.

3. Concerns and recommendations

211. The Committee notes the lack of a uniform terminology on discrimination in different Finnish laws. In light of article 1 of the Convention and in order to better combat acts of racism, the Committee recommends the adoption of explicit anti-discriminatory legislation.

212. The Committee reiterates its concern at the absence of a law prohibiting organizations which promote and incite racial discrimination and of a provision in the Penal Code declaring any dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred punishable by law. The Committee urges the State party to give due consideration in this respect to the Committee's general recommendation VII relating to the implementation of article 4 of the Convention. The Committee also recommends that the State party consider adopting provisions to increase the severity of sentences for racially motivated crimes, in particular racial violence.

213. The Committee is concerned that Roma continue to experience discrimination in the fields of housing, education and employment. It also expresses concern about reports that Roma are sometimes denied access to and service in public places such as restaurants. The Committee recommends that the State party take additional measures at the national and municipal levels to improve the situation of the Roma minority, with a view to preventing social exclusion and discrimination against them.

214. The Committee regrets that the question of land ownership of the Sami has not yet been resolved and that Finland has not acceded to Convention (No. 169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries of the International Labour Organization. Furthermore, it expresses its concern about activities authorized by State bodies in Sami reindeer-breeding areas which may threaten Sami culture and their traditional way of life. The Committee urges the State party to pursue its efforts, together with the Sami people, towards the adequate resolution of the land dispute, giving due consideration in this respect to general recommendation XXIII, and requests the State party to provide full information on this issue in the next periodic report.

215. The Committee expresses its concern that in some cases the new accelerated procedure in the revised Aliens Act would result in the repatriation of an asylum-seeker while his or her appeal was still pending. The Committee recommends that the State party take all available measures to guarantee the legal safeguards for asylum-seekers.

216. The Committee is concerned about the fact that with respect to racially motivated crimes, the police do not always intervene or its action is not always appropriate and that prosecutors hesitate to initiate criminal proceedings. It also notes that according to a 1999 study on attitudes of public authorities towards immigrants, police and frontier guards have the most negative attitude. The Committee recommends the continuation and strengthening of training programmes for police and all law enforcement officials and the improvement of communication between officials and immigrants in order to enhance mutual confidence. In cases where police officers are personally involved in racially motivated acts, it recommends that an independent body investigate and invites judges and prosecutors to be more active and firm in prosecuting these cases.

217. The Committee notes with concern that immigrants, refugees and minorities, in particular Roma, have higher rates of unemployment, have difficulties in gaining access to housing and

social services and have higher rates of school drop-out. The Committee is concerned about the low number of judicial proceedings initiated related to incidents of racial discrimination, including cases of discrimination in employment. The Committee recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to alleviate the situation of immigrants, refugees and minorities, in particular Roma, at the national and municipal levels, especially with respect to housing, employment and education.

218. In the light of article 6 of the Convention, the Committee notes that the only way of obtaining reparation or satisfaction for any damage suffered as a result of an act of racial discrimination is through a penal proceeding. The Committee recommends that the State party consider ensuring alternative measures to penal proceedings in cases of discrimination.

219. The Committee is concerned at the increasing number of racist acts. Also, it notes with concern reports showing that a significant percentage of Finns declare themselves to be racist or partially racist and are opposed to the practice of Islam by immigrants (refugees). It notes also that media often present immigrants and minorities, in particular Roma, in a negative light. The Committee invites the State party to strengthen measures to promote tolerance and combat prejudices, in particular in the field of teaching, education, culture and information. It also recommends that the State party find adequate modalities to make journalists and people working in the media sector more aware of racial discrimination.

220. The Committee further recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to establish the Office of the Discrimination Ombudsman and to provide the necessary human and financial resources to enable the Office to carry out its tasks in an effective way.

221. The Committee further invites the State party to ensure the wide dissemination of the text of the Convention, as well as of the report and the concluding observations adopted thereon. The accepted individual communications procedure under article 14 of the Convention should be widely publicized throughout Finland for the benefit of the general public.

222. The Committee recommends that the State party's next periodic report, due on 16 August 2001, be an updating report, and that it address the points raised in the present concluding observations.

CERD A/58/18 (2003)

394. The Committee considered the sixteenth periodic report of Finland (CERD/C/409/Add.2), which was due in 2001, at its 1600th and 1601st meetings (CERD/C/SR.1600 and 1601), held on 14 and 15 August 2003. At its 1611th meeting (CERD/C/SR.1611), held on 22 August 2003, it adopted the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

395. The Committee welcomes the report, which was submitted by the State party on time, and the additional oral information provided by the delegation. It expresses satisfaction at the fact that non-governmental organizations were invited to participate in the preparation of the report.

396. The Committee also welcomes the attendance of a competent delegation and expresses its appreciation for the constructive responses provided to the questions raised.

B. Positive aspects

397. The Committee acknowledges that the extensive and detailed report of the State party is in conformity with the reporting guidelines and that it addresses the concerns and recommendations formulated by the Committee after the consideration of the State party's previous report.

398. The Committee commends the State party's excellent record of ratification of international human rights instruments.

399. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State party made the optional declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention in 1994 and has ratified the amendments to article 8, paragraph 6, of the Convention, adopted on 15 January 1992 at the Fourteenth Meetings of States Parties to the Convention and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/111.

400. The Committee welcomes the adoption, on 22 March 2001, of a Plan of Action to combat ethnic discrimination and racism aiming to support and develop measures enhancing good inter-ethnic relations and preventing ethnic discrimination and racism in Finnish society. In this connection, the Committee also welcomes the appointment, on 1 September 2001, within the framework of the Plan of Action, of a Minority Ombudsman.

401. The Committee also welcomes the programmes and institutions put in place as well as the research and studies undertaken by the State party for the promotion and protection of human rights, in particular those regarding minorities, in conformity with paragraphs 92 to 98 of the Durban Programme of Action.

402. The Committee welcomes the approval in January 2003 of a government bill revising the Penal Code and including "racist motives" as aggravating circumstances of a crime. It also notes with satisfaction the introduction of a provision punishing participation in organizations which promote or incite racial discrimination.

403. The Committee equally notes with satisfaction that the Ministry of Labour is preparing a government bill whereby two important directives of the European Community, Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, will be implemented.

C. Concerns and recommendations

404. The Committee is of the opinion that the State party's approach to the definition of who may be considered a Sami and thus fall under the relevant legislation established in favour of the Sami, as illustrated by the Act on the Sami Parliament and the specific interpretation placed thereon by the Supreme Administrative Court, is too restrictive.

The Committee considers that by relying mainly, if not exclusively, on the criteria of the language spoken and the taxes levied on a person's ancestors, the State party is not taking into account to a sufficient degree the criterion of self-identification. Accordingly, the Committee suggests that the State party give more adequate weight to self-identification by the individual, as indicated in general recommendation VIII.

405. While the Committee notes the continuous efforts undertaken by the State party to solve the issue of Sami land rights, it regrets that the problem has not yet been resolved and that Finland has so far not adhered to International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. The Committee draws the State party's attention to general recommendation XXIII on the rights of indigenous peoples which, inter alia, calls upon States parties to recognize and protect the rights of indigenous peoples to own, develop, control and use their communal lands, territories and resources.

In this regard, the Committee refers to its previous concluding observations and again urges the State party to find an adequate settlement of the land dispute together with the Sami people, and recommends that it adhere to ILO Convention No. 169 as soon as possible. Furthermore, the Committee requests that the State party provide additional information on this issue in its next periodic report.

406. The Committee is concerned about the significant number of allegations which have been brought to its attention reflecting the existence of racist and xenophobic attitudes among some sectors of the population, notably among the young.

The Committee encourages the State party to continue to monitor all tendencies which may give rise to racist and xenophobic behaviour and to combat the negative consequences of such tendencies. The Committee further recommends that the State party continue to promote at all levels of education general awareness of diversity and multiculturalism and put into practice effective measures to facilitate the integration of minority groups in Finnish society.

407. While the Committee takes note of the efforts undertaken by the State party in monitoring the spread of racist, discriminatory and xenophobic material on the Internet, it is concerned about the continued occurrence of this phenomenon.

The Committee recalls that article 4 of the Convention is applicable to the phenomenon of racism on the Internet and that the fundamental principle of respect for human dignity requires all States to combat dissemination of racial hatred and incitement to racial hatred.

It recommends that the State party take appropriate measures to combat racist propaganda on the Internet and that it provide in its next periodic report information on the development of the situation and measures taken in this field.

408. Concern is also expressed about the “accelerated procedure” provided for in the revised Aliens Act. Under the new provisions, the “accelerated procedure” applies to certain categories of asylum application and, if the application is rejected and entry is refused, could lead to the immediate expulsion of the asylum-seeker. Although such a negative decision can be appealed, it may be enforced within eight days irrespective of an appeal, which would thus have no suspensive effect. In the Committee’s opinion, such narrow time limits may not allow for the proper utilization of the appeal procedure available and may result in an irreversible situation even if the decision of the administrative authorities were overturned on appeal.

The Committee urges the State party to guarantee respect for the legal safeguards for asylum-seekers and to ensure that all its asylum procedures conform to its international obligations in this field.

409. With respect to article 5, the Committee is concerned about the difficulties faced by Roma in the fields of employment, housing and education, as well as about reported cases of discrimination in daily life such as denial of access to public places, restaurants or bars.

The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general recommendation XXVII on discrimination against Roma and recommends that the State party take all necessary measures with a view to promoting tolerance and overcoming prejudices and negative stereotypes in order to avoid any form of discrimination against members of the Roma community.

410. The Committee notes that one of the reasons victims of acts of racial discrimination are reluctant to file a complaint before the competent authorities is the assumption that the complaint would not lead to any result.

The Committee recommends that the State party disseminate as widely as possible information on and raise public awareness of the domestic remedies available against acts of racial discrimination, the legal avenues for obtaining compensation in cases of discrimination and the individual complaint procedure under article 14 of the Convention.

411. The Committee encourages the State party to continue to consult with organizations of civil society working in the area of combating racial discrimination during the preparation of the next

periodic report.

412. The Committee recommends that the State party take into account the relevant parts of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action when implementing the Convention in the domestic legal order, in particular in respect of articles 2 to 7 of the Convention, and that it include in its next periodic report information on further action plans or other measures it has taken to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action at the national level.

413. The Committee recommends that the State party continue the practice of making the reports readily available to the public from the time they are submitted and that it similarly publicize the observations of the Committee on these reports.

414. The Committee recommends that the State party submit its seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth periodic reports jointly in one document, due on 13 August 2007, and that it address all points raised in the present concluding observations.