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the Elimination
of all Forms of
Racial Discrimination**

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Seventieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1804th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Thursday, 1 March 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. de GOUTTES

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 5) (continued)

Sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Czech Republic (CERD/C/CZE/7; HRI/CORE/1/Add.71/Rev.2)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of the Czech Republic took places at the Committee table.
2. Ms. BARŠOVÁ (Czech Republic) said that discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnicity weakened the foundations of liberal and democratic societies, and constituted a fundamental threat to social cohesion. Although her Government considered the elimination of racial discrimination to be a political priority and had adopted measures to protect all persons from such discrimination, it was aware that, owing to the complex historical and social context of the Czech Republic, members of certain minority groups were at greater risk of discrimination than others.
3. Her Government considered that the situation of the Roma required additional, specific remedial measures alongside general policies and instruments. In order to develop measures to protect the Roma, relevant information and statistics were required to understand fully the complexity of the situation. The Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms expressly stipulated that everyone had the right to decide his or her ethnicity. Any classification of persons in terms of race or ethnicity conducted by public authorities was therefore problematic. The State authorities were, however, making efforts to monitor and observe the situation, particularly through quantitative and qualitative analyses. In that regard, the Czech Republic had participated in the international project entitled “Towards Common Measures against Discrimination”, which had been particularly useful. The project had been implemented under the management of the Norwegian Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud in 2005 and 2006. Its conclusions contained expert recommendations on collecting data on inequality and discrimination.
4. An analysis of socially excluded Roma localities and communities had been conducted in 2006; its results were publicly available and would be used to develop programmes at the municipal and regional levels. The analysis only covered Roma who were in a situation of social risk or exclusion, and did not provide information about those who did not suffer from integration problems or belonged to the Roma intelligentsia. A detailed plan had been established for the implementation of the updated Concept of Roma Integration from 2006 to 2009. In April 2006, her Government had approved a set of principles on the long-term strategy of Roma integration up to 2025, which set the target of improving the social status of the Roma to the extent that there would be no further need for affirmative action, particularly in terms of education and employment. At the same time, the Government was keen to ensure full respect for Roma traditions and culture, and to foster the concept of the Czech nation as an inclusive society, open to minorities. Measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion among vulnerable groups, including the Roma, were also included in the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion

2006-2008. Her country was participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015), which recognized the transnational dimension of the Roma situation in Europe and focused on sharing experiences with neighbouring countries.

5. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages had been successfully ratified and would enter into force in her country on 1 March 2007. In accordance with the Charter, Slovak, Polish, German and the language of the Roma would be considered minority languages. The Charter would facilitate the use of Polish as an official language in northern Moravia, and would encourage the development of Roma and other minority languages.

6. There were an increasing number of immigrants in the Czech Republic, which represented a change and a challenge for the Government, since historically, emigration had exceeded immigration on Czech territory. Efforts were therefore being made to improve conditions for the integration of foreign nationals, which would be facilitated by an amendment to the Act on the Residence of Foreigners made in 2006. As a result of that amendment, the time required before foreign nationals without family members in the Czech Republic could apply for permanent residence had been reduced from 10 to 5 years.

7. A study on the integration of foreign nationals had been developed in 2005 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which approached integration as a mutual process of adaptation, with the participation of civil society. The Family Next Door project had been implemented from 2004 to 2006, and had encouraged Czech and immigrant families to meet over a shared dinner. Each year, personal contacts had thus been established between 50 Czech and 50 immigrant families.

8. Improvements in the situation of the Roma would require long-term efforts. The Government was focusing on education as the key to change. A new School Act had entered into force, and had launched a fundamental reform of the education system, allowing broader integration of pupils with special educational needs into normal classes. The Act ensured that the necessary support was provided for Roma pupils. Although it did not distinguish between standard schools and special-needs schools, it created the necessary conditions for all pupils to be educated and supported in accordance with their specific educational needs. Teaching assistants were provided for socio-culturally disadvantaged children, priority being given to the appointment of assistants from the Roma community. The teaching assistant programme was funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. In 2006, there had been 330 subsidized teaching assistants.

9. Measures had been taken to improve preschool education for Roma pupils, including the development of the concept of timely care for socio-culturally disadvantaged children, which aimed to increase the number of socio-culturally disadvantaged children in preschool education or preparatory classes. Preparatory classes were intended to bring children to the required level of educational development before they began compulsory full-time schooling. Schools also offered a full-day programme to increase education opportunities for disadvantaged children and children from the Roma community, reduce absenteeism and increase pupil motivation.

10. Her Government was aware of the seriousness and danger of crimes motivated by race or ethnicity. The situation was monitored by the Ministry of the Interior, which presented the

Government with annual reports on extremism. Statistics on extremist and racially-motivated crimes had been presented to the Committee in writing, in a document without a symbol distributed in the meeting room. The statistics showed that the racist crime rate was relatively stable, and had in fact decreased slightly over recent years. In 2005 there had been manifestations of anti-Semitism linked predominantly to right-wing extremist groups. Anti-Semitism was a priority of the interdepartmental commission to combat extremism, racism and xenophobia, and of the Working Group to Combat Extremism of the Visegrád Four and Austria.

11. In 2006 a publicity campaign had begun to encourage members of minorities to join the Czech police force; the target groups had been members of all national and ethnic minorities who met the basic criteria for recruitment. People from minority groups interested in working for the police force followed the same recruitment procedures as Czech nationals. The campaign had been connected with the Government's 2006 campaign against racism. Preparatory courses had been arranged for the police operations study programme for Roma candidates who met the criteria for admission to the Czech police force. A new system for investigating unlawful conduct by police officers was being developed and would remove such investigations from the remit of the Ministry of the Interior. Human rights training programmes were organized for personnel employed in the police, army, education, judiciary and social work. Secondary police schools ran courses on extremism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. In 2006, racial discrimination had been included in training for judges and public prosecutors, with emphasis on combating xenophobia and racism, and on procedures to be applied in preventing such crimes.

12. The Employment Act provided for the equal treatment of all persons without prejudice to their racial or ethnic origin. Under the Act, employment offices were required to offer university graduates and other persons, including Roma, up to the age of 25 individual action plans for increasing employment opportunities. As part of the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, her Government was conducting awareness-raising activities to eliminate prejudice against Roma, focusing on cross-cultural education at the preschool, primary and secondary education levels. NGOs were involved in the implementation of such projects. Since 2006, the Council of Europe "All Different - All Equal" campaign had been implemented in the Czech Republic with the aim of motivating young people to play an active role in cultivating a peaceful global community in a spirit of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding. Annual government campaigns against racism focused on eliminating racial prejudice through public awareness-raising, particularly among young people.

13. Her Government recognized that many social problems had roots at the local level, and would endeavour to ensure the establishment of the necessary mechanisms to prevent social exclusion. It would also address the issue of financial assistance for low-cost housing. Further efforts would be made to pass an anti-discrimination act, the first attempt having recently failed. The new bill was being reviewed at the inter-ministerial level.

14. Ms. OTÁHALOVÁ (Czech Republic) said that the anti-discrimination bill that had been rejected by the Senate would have addressed many areas of discrimination, provided for the establishment of an equal treatment centre, and increased the sphere of competence of the Office of the Ombudsman. A new bill had been drafted and was currently awaiting comment from the various ministries. Adoption of the bill was a top priority for her Government.

15. Mr. BUREŠ (Czech Republic) said that the reduction of crime motivated by racial hatred was a priority for the Ministry of the Interior. Only a small number of racially-motivated crimes in the Czech Republic were violent. The majority involved the use of symbols and verbal abuse. His Government recognized that a unified police approach was required to eliminate the use of neo-Nazi or racist symbols, and had therefore produced a training manual, including a graphic list of all racist symbols, which was currently being distributed to all police forces. Skinhead and neo-Nazi concerts also required an integrated approach. Although a clear procedure had been established to deal with those concerts, it was still too early to assess its impact. The aim of the procedure was to stop all concerts and performances of songs of a racist nature, and punish those responsible.

16. Racist acts were rarely committed by police officers, but measures were in place to ensure that any racially-motivated crime would be prosecuted and punished, since it would constitute a clear abuse of official power. The independent investigative body for crimes committed by police officers would be removed from the aegis of the Ministry of the Interior. Training in Roma history and traditions had become an important focus of police training, particularly in regions with large Roma communities or high levels of racially-motivated crime, and was aimed at improving police-Roma relations.

17. Another important initiative to improve relations between the police and Roma was a project called “Joint Words”, started in northern Moravia, which ran summer camps for socially-excluded, mainly Roma children. Police officers managed those camps as group leaders in their spare time. The project had proved to be an effective way of increasing trust and understanding between the Roma community and the police.

18. The Working Group of the Government Council for Roma Community Affairs had in the past two years focused on what it identified as two major problems: usury and increased indebtedness of the members of socially-excluded communities (list of issues, question 5). A special project had been started to inform those vulnerable individuals, including Roma, of the risks of indebtedness and how to benefit from social assistance. The results of that project would be available in a few years.

19. In response to question 9, he explained that the Criminal Code punished not only active participation in groups inciting racial discrimination (with up to two years’ imprisonment), but also persons who joined or formed such groups to commit such crimes or share their behaviour. The Government was thus of the view that the Criminal Code fully covered the provisions of article 4 (b) of the Convention.

20. Mr. WALEK (Czech Republic) said that among new developments in the areas of social inclusion and housing his Government had issued plans for the establishment of an agency for the prevention of social exclusion in Roma areas in order to improve the living conditions of those communities. The agency would be funded by European structural funds and by government funds distributed to NGOs, schools and municipalities.

21. The new social housing bill would constitute a step forward, in particular by making municipalities, which conducted their own housing policies, responsible for providing housing to people in need. The State had already created financial incentives for municipalities to build subsidized housing for socially disadvantaged people, including disabled or senior citizens.

22. The Governmental Council for Roma Community Affairs, an advisory body consisting of Roma representatives and State officials, was considering support for seven projects submitted by municipalities and an NGO to rebuild substandard housing.

23. Mr. KAPLAN (Czech Republic) said, in response to question 14, that the Employment Act, which had entered into force at the end of 2004, defined direct discrimination in employment on grounds of sex, age, religion, health, race or ethnic origin. The Act also indicated that indirect discrimination related to apparently neutral conditions of access to employment. Employment agencies were in charge of investigating complaints by citizens who had been allegedly discriminated against by companies. If found guilty, the companies were fined.

24. Mr. POKORNÝ (Czech Republic), referring to question 24, said that since 1999 the integration of foreigners was evaluated annually by his Government on the basis of a “Concept for the integration of foreign nationals”, which had been significantly amended in 2005. The aim of that “Concept” was to present foreigners, including immigrants, as valuable members of society, and about US\$ 1 million had been allocated for relevant projects in 2006. The projects included: “They Live Next to Us”, which organized discussions between foreign and Czech pupils in schools; “Dialogue of Cultures”, which invited representatives of various linguistic, cultural and religious groups to engage in dialogue; “Migration and Media”, conducted by an organization called People in Need, to create a positive image of migrants, in particular through the media.

25. In response to question 16, he said that the Czech authorities did not have any way of collecting information on the race or ethnicity of children and that, particularly because of the subjective nature of self-identification as members of a certain ethnic group, they did not have any information that could indicate possible differential treatment of the Roma population.

26. The removal of children from their families and placement within institutions were ordered only when the life, health or development of the child was considered at serious risk, i.e. in cases of abuse, neglect, physical violence or imminent threat of material suffering that could harm the child’s health. It could be argued that, as a high number of Roma families were at risk of social exclusion and poverty, a higher than average number of Roma children found themselves in those situations and were therefore placed in institutions. However, even if that assertion were substantiated with statistical data, it would not reveal discriminatory practice on the part of the State authorities but only a statistical correlation.

27. Nevertheless, as studies had shown that in the Czech Republic the number of such placements was disproportionately high, the Government planned to improve the prevention of situations of risk and its cooperation with affected families. In particular, in October 2006, it had established a new policy on the care of abused and neglected children and children living apart from their families. Among the measures it incorporated, the policy required that placement within institutions be assessed and justified, and allowed for the support of families by psychological and pedagogical counsellors. The impact of that policy would be evaluated in 2009.

28. Ms. MAŠKOVÁ (Czech Republic), responding to questions 17, 21 and 23, said the Education Act did not distinguish between mainstream and special education, since it guaranteed

the universal right of children to education without any form of discrimination. It also guaranteed the right of children to educational counselling services, and to due consideration of their educational needs, whatever they were. The special educational needs of children from socially-disadvantaged environments were adequately provided for through educational methods and content tailored to those needs.

29. Curriculum reform, which was to be fully implemented by September 2007, enabled schools to design their own programmes, and thus gave them the opportunity to adapt them to meet the particular needs of their students. Other measures also contributed to improving the situation of Roma children, including free enrolment in the last year of kindergarten; free preparatory classes prior to compulsory schooling for socially-disadvantaged children; government-trained teaching assistants to deal with special educational needs.

30. Under the Education Act, parents could choose where to enrol their children; however, mainstream schools had an obligation to enrol children resident in their catchment area.

31. Mr. YUTZIS, Country Rapporteur, asked why the ratification of Protocol No. 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights, mentioned in paragraph 16 of the report, had been delayed. Above all, he wondered why the Czech Parliament had not yet approved the bill comprising provisions for protection against discrimination and equal treatment which had been submitted in December 2004. Was the text not satisfactory?

32. He asked how censuses were conducted in the Czech Republic, as he had found conflicting data.

33. He would like the delegation to clarify whether there was an independent body that investigated police action to ensure that individuals were protected from violence, abuse or discrimination by officers. He would also like to know how many Roma were policemen.

34. In connection with article 4 of the Convention, he commended the State party's efforts to prohibit the display of extremist symbols, incitement to hatred, manifestations of racism in the army and social exclusion. The use of the Probation and Mediation Service as a mechanism to combat extremism, the adoption of a strategy for the prevention of socio-pathological activity in schools, and the implementation of a national strategy to combat racial violence and discrimination were to be applauded. A detailed examination of the report led to the conclusion that no distinction was made between discrimination, racial intolerance, right or left-wing extremism, terrorism and Islamic extremism. Not all of those issues fell within the scope of the Convention, and he cautioned the State party against viewing them as one overarching problem.

35. Given the current international political climate, it would be unwise to treat the situation of minorities and migrants as a national security issue. The young descendants of immigrants who had set fire to cars in the Paris suburbs and those who had perpetrated the London bombings had shown that protecting "Fortress Europe" was not simply a matter for the police. Respect for different cultures and communities and their integration based on mutual respect and in conditions of equality were crucial to the establishment of viable democratic States. A lack of openness towards others was the greatest threat to democracy.

36. The report stated that neither extremist activities nor “dangerous” religious sects posed any threat to the State party’s democratic institutions. The delegation should explain the meaning of “religious sect” and indicate what potential danger such a body might pose.

37. It emerged from the report that neo-Nazi concerts were becoming increasingly popular. The Government appeared to be aware of the problem, without taking action. While those events had previously occurred behind closed doors, both the tribute to Franco on 11 December 2006 and the skinhead concert on 18 November 2006 had been held in public places. Senator Jaromir Stetina had criticized the police for its failure to intervene. Article 4 of the Convention was very specific in that regard, and he called on the State party to honour its consequent obligations.

38. Among the most critical issues facing the State party was the situation of the Roma. In its second opinion on the Czech Republic adopted on 24 February 2004, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities had noted that “although the general climate in Czech society is one of mutual respect and understanding, and significant improvements have been made in inter-ethnic dialogue, there are still reports of prejudice and intolerance directed at certain persons - particularly Roma and foreigners”. Roma suffered from discrimination in most areas of life, including education, employment, access to public services, health care and housing. An opinion poll carried out in January 2007 had revealed that 76 per cent of the population had a negative perception of the Roma. While official statistics placed the number of Roma residents at near 17,000, other organizations spoke of some 200,000. He asked the delegation to explain that discrepancy.

39. The report also showed signs of prejudice against the Roma. It was alleged that they had “little regard for education” and did not support school attendance by their children. Paragraph 12 referred to the Roma settling “in an uncontrolled fashion”. He had been surprised at the explicit reference made to the Roma - but no other national minority - as occasional perpetrators of extremist crimes. Unless the Roma were the only members of minority groups found guilty of such crimes, the reference was clearly discriminatory. Also, referring to “research projects on the Roma question” could be read as implying that the problem was not their disadvantaged situation, but the Roma themselves. The delegation should comment on the language used in the report.

40. Statistics revealed that some 50 per cent of children enrolled in special education were Roma. Given that special education curricula covered only 30 per cent of the material taught in regular schools, the placement of Roma children in special education clearly hampered their advancement. It was difficult to understand why the percentage of Roma children with learning difficulties was disproportionately high, and he would welcome information on the criteria used to determine whether a child was in need of special education. He urged the State party to address the exclusion of Roma children from regular education, which had serious repercussions for their future. The delegation should further indicate why in some educational establishments tuition fees for nationals were different from those for non-nationals.

41. Another serious issue was segregation in housing. He was deeply concerned at the fact that there were 310 ghettos in the State party, 35 per cent of them created in recent years. Life in a ghetto was widely known to have disastrous consequences on a person’s social status. It

appeared that the responsibility for ghettos in the State party lay with the municipalities and many had reportedly been privatized. He urged the State party to review that practice, which gave rise to property speculation, among other problems.

42. Unemployment among the Roma stood at 70 per cent, as opposed to 7 per cent for other inhabitants. Obstacles to Roma employment, such as low education levels and prejudice, should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

43. Although the practice of forced sterilization of Roma women appeared to be largely relegated to history, a report prepared by the Ombudsman in 2005 suggested that there had been some cases in the recent past. He called on the State party to eradicate that practice and to compensate the victims.

44. Mr. KJAERUM expressed the hope that some of the recommendations made by the Committee following the consideration of the report would be incorporated in the new anti-discrimination bill. He commended the State party for the development of new and innovative ways of identifying racial discrimination, in cooperation with the Danish Institute for Human Rights. The delegation should indicate the extent of NGO involvement in the preparation of the report.

45. He asked whether non-citizens had the right to engage in political activities, join a political party or vote in local elections. The United States Department of State 2005 country report on human rights practices in the Czech Republic had highlighted the lack of minority representation in the Chamber of Deputies, the Senate or the Cabinet. He asked whether that situation had changed following the recent elections.

46. According to the report, for same sex-partnerships to be recognized at least one of the spouses had to be a Czech citizen. He asked whether that requirement also applied to heterosexual couples. If not, the delegation should explain the reasons for such inequality.

47. The absence of specific legal provisions prohibiting discrimination in housing might be partly responsible for the difficulties experienced by the Roma in that regard. He asked whether the 2004 Anti-Discrimination Act explicitly prohibited discrimination in access to housing.

48. The 2005 Education Act guaranteed universal access to education for all Czech citizens, European Union (EU) citizens and persons legally resident in the State party. The delegation should explain why access to education was contingent on citizenship, and whether children of asylum-seekers, refugees or illegal migrants were denied access to education. Such denial would amount to a violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had been ratified by the State party.

49. As the report said nothing about Roma women, he requested detailed information on the situation of that particularly vulnerable population group.

50. Mr. SICILIANOS, referring to the Final Statement of the Public Defender of Rights in the matter of Sterilizations Performed in Contravention of the Law and Proposed Remedial Measures, and the State party's reply to question 12 on the list of issues, requested additional information on the remedial action taken by the Ministry of Health in the light of forced

sterilizations. It would be useful to know whether victims had received compensation and whether an investigation had been conducted into the cases that had occurred prior to 1992. In 2003, the State party's delegation had assured the Committee that the practice of forced sterilization had stopped in 1991. However, the Public Defender's report referred to cases of illegal forced sterilization that had occurred in 2001. While the practice was clearly not public policy, given the seriousness of the allegation the State had an obligation to investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible and to provide adequate compensation under article 6 of the Convention.

51. Reports had been received alleging that despite the new legislation that had entered into force on 1 January 2005, special schools for Roma children had merely been renamed, and the curriculum and teachers remained the same. He requested further details on the new curricula that would be fully implemented in 2007, on steps taken to raise teachers' awareness of the Roma question, and on efforts to integrate Roma children into mainstream schools.

52. He asked whether the anti-discrimination bill was the instrument that would give effect to EU directives 2000/43 and 2000/78.

53. Mr. CALITZAY asked what measures were currently being taken to prevent forced sterilizations, and to ensure that Roma women were not victims of double discrimination, as mentioned in paragraph 6 of the Committee's general recommendation XXVII. It was unclear whether the 11,716 people registered as of Roma nationality were Czech, or Czech Roma. The meaning of the phrase "proper life management and proper lifestyle" (report, para. 132) was unclear. Who determined what constituted such life management and such a lifestyle? Had all Roma health assistants learned those skills? It would be useful to learn whether Roma pupils had the right to be taught at preprimary, primary and secondary levels in their native language.

54. Mr. AVTONOMOV requested additional information on the nature of the complaints addressed to the Ombudsman. In particular, he asked whether any such complaints specifically related to the Convention. Further details of the decisions taken on the substance of the complaints, and measures to implement them, should be provided.

55. He commended the State party for publishing and disseminating the current periodic report and the Committee's concluding observations on previous reports. Were they published in English only, or also in Czech?

56. It would be useful to learn how many people were currently in prisons and detention centres, and what percentage of that number were immigrants. How many people had been detained or imprisoned as a result of a court decision? He requested information on the number of Roma, Vietnamese and Ukrainians in society and in prison; a comparison would be useful. He urged the Government to consider the Committee's general recommendation XXXI on the prevention of racial discrimination in the administration and functioning of the criminal justice system and to provide the Committee with the information detailed in the recommendation.

57. Mr. EWOMSAN asked whether any people of African origin currently lived in the State party and if so, whether any of them had ever been a victim of a human rights violation motivated by ethnic origin.

58. Mr. VALENCIA RODRÍGUEZ asked for additional details of how the State party's entry into the EU had affected implementation of the provisions of the Convention. He asked whether fundamental rights of illegal immigrants, such as personal security, non-discrimination, the right to work, basic education for their children and access to basic health services, were respected. What had been the visible effects of new amendments and legislation relating to the question of discrimination? While he commended the State party for having appointed an Ombudsman, the Ombudsman's powers should be strengthened and his recommendations should carry more weight in judicial decisions. The scope of the Ombudsman's work should be extended to include private institutions. He urged the State party to implement mediation and to allow the Ombudsman to play a fundamental role in cases of discrimination.

59. Additional information about measures to improve the situation of the Roma and their results should be provided. He requested clarification of the roles played by social workers in the Roma communities. The Government should take measures to ensure that the Roma enclaves were not focuses of neglect and abject poverty in which inhabitants did not enjoy the protection to which they were entitled. The State party should keep the Committee abreast of the findings of research projects on the Roma question conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

60. Further measures should be taken to counteract extremist, neo-Nazi and skinhead groups, as their activities could violate the provisions of the Convention and seriously disrupt social stability.

61. Mr. LINDGREN ALVES said that he failed to understand the motivation behind the apparent fragmentation of the State party into national minorities. The meaning of the term "Communist genocide" (report, para. 47, footnote 45) was unclear.

62. Mr. PILLAI requested clarification of the meaning of the term "population by nationality", particularly with reference to the statistics on the Vietnamese population provided in the core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.71/Rev.2, para. 9). It would be useful to learn whether it referred to people who had been born in Viet Nam, subsequently taken up residence in the State party and acquired Czech nationality. If not, he failed to understand why there were two different sets of figures for Vietnamese by nationality and Vietnamese by citizenship. Given that the periodic report referred to the Vietnamese as foreigners, 61 per cent of whom had permanent residence, it was difficult to understand whether that population group had a clearly visible ethnic identity. If such an identity existed, it would be useful to learn how the Government assessed the extent of the group's enjoyment of the rights under article 5 of the Convention.

63. The delegation should indicate what action had been taken against individuals who conducted themselves in a way that tended to promote discrimination against the Roma. That was a particular concern in the light of reports the Committee had received that individuals were rarely held accountable for anti-Roma statements.

64. Mr. TANG Chengyuan asked what role the independent police commission played. It would be useful to know how effective were its investigations of crimes committed by police officers and whether victims received compensation.

65. Additional details should be provided on the local implementation and coordination of national policies to improve the livelihood of the Roma.

66. Reports had been received of unfavourable treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers, some of whom were sent to detention centres. He would welcome the delegation's comments on how those people's rights were respected.

67. Mr. THORNBERRY requested further information on the ethos of regular schools in the State party, and asked whether they provided a friendly environment for Roma pupils. It would be useful to learn more about teachers who were drawn from the Roma communities. Was mother-tongue teaching available to Roma pupils? If so, how was pupils' transition to the Czech language managed? He asked how syllabuses described the Roma, and whether Roma organizations participated in developing those syllabuses.

68. The meaning of the terms "low socio-cultural status" and "socio-culturally disadvantaged" in the State party's reply to question 17 of the list of issues was unclear. That conjunction of terms was worrying as it seemed to imply inequality of respect for cultural background.

69. He had been surprised to read that no separate human rights study programmes currently existed in the State party's universities. He asked how many universities there were, and whether there were courses on general human rights in international law and the rights of minorities. He requested further information on the training of lawyers and their access to human rights courses.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.