



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

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Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Seventy-seventh session

Summary record of the 2019th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 6 August 2010, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Kemal

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

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

Sixth and seventh periodic reports of Uzbekistan (continued) (CERD/C/UZB/6-7; CERD/C/UZB/Q/6-7; HRI/CORE/1/Add.129)

1. *The delegation of Uzbekistan took places at the Committee table.*
2. **The Chairperson** invited the delegation to respond to the questions raised by the Committee at the previous meeting.
3. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan), replying to a question about nomads, said that there were no nomadic peoples in the rural areas of Uzbekistan. The Uzbeks were historically a settled people, although there had been some Kyrgyz and Tatar nomads in the past.
4. When the Committee had enquired about the Roma during the review of the State party's previous report, the delegation had been unable to respond. However, the question had served as a stimulus to action and a point on the Roma had been included in the national action plan to implement the concluding observations. The Izhtimoi Fikr Centre for Public Opinion Studies had undertaken a sociological study and the delegation would present the publication containing the findings to the Committee. His country's core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.129) should perhaps also be updated to reflect the study.
5. The Roma were referred to in the Uzbek language as "Lyuli", which was not a pejorative term. As the report had been submitted in Russian, the Russian word corresponding to "Gypsies" in English had been used. His delegation was aware of the terminological problem and that the correct terms were Roma or Sinti.
6. The Committee had asked why representatives of the Roma community did not always wish to be identified as such. According to the study, many identified themselves as either Uzbeks or Tajiks and spoke the Uzbek or Tajik language interspersed with Roma words. He assured the Committee that the situation of the Roma was fundamentally different from that found in Europe and in many countries of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Although most members of the community were settled and well-adjusted to their non-Roma environment, they preserved their traditional way of life. The vast majority were Uzbeks and the remainder had residential status. There were also many cases of mixed marriage.
7. **Mr. Mukhammadiev** (Uzbekistan) said that the Inter-ethnic Cultural Centre was a non-profit-making organization that promoted cultural activities on behalf of national diasporas. It organized festivals, concerts, exhibitions, seminars and conferences. Many leaders of participant cultural centres were prominent social activists, business people, scientists, members of political parties and candidates for electoral office. For instance, the President of the Russian Cultural Centre was a member of the People's Democratic Party and a former Senator. The President of the Turkish Cultural Centre was a member of the Governing Council of the National Revival Democratic Party. The cultural centres also engaged in educational activities. For instance, they monitored the quality of textbooks in minority languages and arranged courses in Greek, Polish, Bulgarian and other languages. The centres forged close links with the diplomatic community and study trips were organized to the countries concerned. They supported gifted young people who lacked funds to pursue their studies and some also provided assistance to kindergartens. The Russian, Korean and Armenian Cultural Centres published their own newspapers.
8. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan), responding to a question about the Turkic languages, said that they were spoken by over 150 million people. A group of scientists had actually

proposed developing a form of “Esperanto” based on the Turkic languages. It had also been suggested that Turkish should be recognized as a United Nations working language.

9. **Mr. Mukhammadiev** (Uzbekistan) said that the languages of the Bashkirs and the Tatars were similar but their cultures were very different. There was a large population of Tatars in Uzbekistan and a smaller number of Bashkirs. There was a joint Tatar-Bashkiri Cultural Centre but also a separate Bashkiri Cultural Centre. The centres were voluntary associations and were registered with the Ministry of Justice.

10. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan), replying to a question about the representation of women and national minorities in Parliament, said that 15 per cent of the country’s senators were women. Most ethnic minorities were also represented: there were 88 Uzbeks, 5 Karakalpaks, 2 Russians, 1 Kazakh, 1 Korean, 1 Tatar and 1 Georgian. Twenty-two per cent of the members of the lower house, the Legislative Chamber, were women. There were 137 Uzbeks, 7 Karakalpaks, 3 Russians, 2 Tajiks and 1 Tatar.

11. A Committee member had asked why only 2 of the 16 senators appointed by the President of the Republic were women. In fact, the President had appointed four women senators. One was the Chairperson of the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan, the largest non-governmental women’s organization. Another had become the Deputy President of the Senate. A third was the head of the legislative section of the Senate and the fourth was the Deputy Major of Tashkent. The proportion of women in the Senate had increased since the Government’s decision to introduce a quota system. At least 30 per cent of party electoral candidates must now be women. As a result, the recent parliamentary elections had been strongly supported by representatives of the international community, including the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

12. **Mr. Akhmedov** (Uzbekistan), replying to questions about statistics, said that the Government had established the State Statistics Committee in January 2003 and that the uniform statistical information system had been upgraded by legislation enacted in December 2004. The Committee was an executive agency, and ministries and other public bodies were required to comply with its demands. Relying on established international practices and information technology, it had developed methodologies designed to collect a broad range of reliable data. Pursuant to a presidential decree issued in November 2008, the Committee had adopted further measures aimed at improving technical equipment and providing advanced training courses for the staff of the various statistical agencies. A further statistical programme had been approved by a ministerial decree issued in January 2010. The State Statistics Committee would develop demographic indicators showing the size and composition of the population as well as migratory movements. The Ministry of Education would also compile statistics on all levels of education and special education institutions.

13. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan), replying to a question about elections, said the Constitution stipulated that participation was voluntary. No one would be called to account for failing to cast a vote. However, the level of non-participation was very low. The turnout for the 2007 presidential election and the 2009 parliamentary elections had been over 70 per cent.

14. With regard to the status of the Convention in the Uzbek legal system, the Constitution proclaimed the primacy of international law over domestic legislation, a rule that was reaffirmed in all laws and codes. In the event of a conflict between international legal norms and domestic law, the international norms would prevail.

15. **Mr. Rakhmanov** (Uzbekistan) said that the Plenum of the Supreme Court issued decrees that all other courts were required to respect. One fundamental decree on court sentencing referred to article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Another Plenum decree

referred to the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. The decree concerning cases involving human trafficking referred to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

16. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights were helping Uzbekistan to provide practical training for judges in the application of international human rights norms. A special chair on international law and human rights had been established at the Ministry of Justice centre for the training of legal personnel, including judges. More than 120 international human rights instruments had been translated into Uzbek over the past five years. Uzbekistan was a party to more than 70 such instruments.

17. **Mr. Shigabuddinov** (Uzbekistan) referred to the Committee's recommendation that Uzbekistan should ratify the amendment to article 8 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination adopted at the fourteenth Meeting of States Parties in 1992, the purpose of which was to finance the Committee from the regular budget of the United Nations. He informed the Committee that Uzbekistan was still discussing the possibility of ratifying the amendment.

18. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that Uzbekistan had ratified eight international human rights instruments during the past two years. They included the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (No. 138); the ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182); and the Protocol to prevent human trafficking already mentioned by a previous speaker.

19. Uzbekistan was considering the possibility of recognizing the Committee's competence under article 14 of the Convention. It had already ratified the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights concerning individual communications.

20. His country had played an active part in the 2009 Durban Review Conference and attached considerable importance to the recommendations contained in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

21. The Committee had queried the consistency of the definition of discrimination in the Uzbek Criminal Code with article 1 of the Convention. He agreed that it failed to refer to the purpose of discrimination. The members of the Uzbek Parliament would be informed of the Committee's concluding observations and would study them carefully. The issue could be addressed either in a range of legislative enactments or in a separate law. More than 30 laws already referred to discrimination in connection with the principle of equality among citizens. At any rate, the Parliament would continue to look into the matter.

22. The Committee had also enquired about the status of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The Constitution recognized it as a sovereign rather than an autonomous Republic and even recognized its right to secede. He wondered whether there was any other federal State with a comparable provision in its constitution. Karakalpakstan had its own constitution, citizenship and State authorities, and its leaders held many high offices in the Uzbek Government and in the judicial system. The Karakalpak parliament was called the Joqargy Kenes (Supreme Council).

23. **Mr. Rakhmanov** (Uzbekistan) said that there were 714 judges in ordinary courts, 655 of them Uzbek, 32 Karakalpak, 10 Tajik, 4 Russian, 4 Tatar, 4 Kazakh and 5 of other nationalities. In the Supreme Court, there were 34 judges, 4 of whom were Karakalpak, and 1 Tajik.

24. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that, after gaining independence, his country had established a strong republic in which the President had been the head of State and head of the executive and had chaired the Cabinet of Ministers. However, since 2003, the President's authority had been reduced in favour of increased powers for the Prime Minister and the executive. The President was no longer head of the executive or chair of the Cabinet of Ministers. In 2008, he had transferred the power to appoint ambassadors and grant amnesties to the Senate. He now played more of a coordinating role between the legislative, the executive and the judiciary.

25. Under the Constitution, the President, deputies, the Supreme Court, the Procurator-General and the Constitutional Court all had the right of legislative initiative. The presidential decree of 2 August 2005 on the abolition of the death sentence had laid the foundations for the law of 2007, which had come into force on 1 January 2008. The death penalty had been abolished for crimes committed in peacetime and wartime, without recourse to a moratorium. Those who had been sentenced to death prior to the abolition of the penalty had been given life or extended prison sentences. According to the hierarchy of domestic legislation, the highest law of the land was the Constitution, followed by international instruments, domestic legislation, and then subsidiary legal texts. Presidential decrees had the latter status and could not contradict other instruments of international or domestic legislation.

26. **Mr. Akhmedov** (Uzbekistan) said that the rights of Uzbek citizens were protected in the country and abroad. All persons born in Uzbekistan were Uzbek citizens, as were several other groups under the terms of the relevant international agreements. The Citizenship Act provided that citizens of Uzbekistan did not have the right to dual citizenship. Citizens were obliged to complete military service. The Act had been based in part on the Council of Europe Convention on Reduction of Cases of Multiple Nationality and Military Obligations in Cases of Multiple Nationality.

27. **Mr. Mukhammadiev** (Uzbekistan), responding to Mr. Ewomsan's comments on the issue of tolerance, said that all citizens enjoyed equal rights, regardless of their language, ethnic or national origin. Those rights were protected under the Constitution and many other instruments of domestic legislation. Governmental and social organizations monitored the implementation of that legislation. Uzbek society had a long history of tolerance and was highly sensitive to racial discrimination. The country's national and international cultural centres had been designed precisely to consolidate the culture of tolerance and peace in society.

28. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said he would present the Committee with a publication illustrating the tolerant nature of Uzbek society. He suggested that Committee members might wish to visit States parties prior to considering their reports. His Government would welcome the opportunity to give the Committee a better picture of life in Uzbekistan. While tolerance among the population was important, it was essential that legislation clearly prohibited all forms of discrimination and promoted the principle of equality and equal rights. The Criminal Code included a number of provisions prohibiting racial discrimination.

29. **Mr. Rakhmanov** (Uzbekistan) said that several pieces of legislation had been enacted to guarantee the independence of the judiciary, based on the United Nations Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary. They provided for the primacy of the law, the independence of the judiciary from the executive, provision of the necessary material

and technical conditions to ensure the administration of justice by courts and social protection for judges. He would present the Committee with a brochure on that issue.

30. A commission including prominent jurists, academics, senators and high-ranking law enforcement staff was responsible for appointing and training judges. Supreme Court judges were proposed by the President and elected by senators of the Oliy Majlis. Judges in Karakalpakstan were elected by the Jokargy Kenes, having been proposed by the President of that body. The Government deemed the current selection system and training provided to judges to be in line with the relevant international principles and standards.

31. **Mr. Shigabuddinov** (Uzbekistan) said that his country had a long history of cooperating with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), having ensured the repatriation of thousands of Tajik and Turkmen refugees and provided humanitarian assistance to refugees from Afghanistan. The stabilization of the situation in Tajikistan and the end of military activities in Afghanistan had enabled the Government to begin active cooperation with UNHCR, resulting in the repatriation of many Afghan refugees. After the tragic events of June 2010 in Kyrgyzstan, part of the UNHCR mission had located in Andijan province, near the border with Kyrgyzstan, while UNHCR coordination officers had stayed in Tashkent. Staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had coordinated all aspects of humanitarian assistance to the Kyrgyz refugees, involving daily meetings with UNHCR staff and providing significant logistical and organizational support. His Government had also set up a corridor for humanitarian assistance to Kyrgyzstan once the refugees had returned. UNHCR experts had been closely involved in all aspects of the provision of humanitarian assistance, and the Government's cooperation with that agency had proved constructive and efficient.

32. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that the Ombudsman had received a number of complaints, but none specifically concerning racial discrimination. The Ombudsman had representatives in each region of the country. The Committee would be provided with a document detailing the Ombudsman's role and statistics on the complaints that had been filed with his Office. The National Human Rights Centre functioned in accordance with the Paris Principles.

33. Action plans had been developed on the basis of the Committee's 2006 concluding observations and the 2008 universal periodic review.

34. He agreed that it was necessary to implement measures to prevent and combat so-called "hidden discrimination".

35. **Mr. Thornberry** asked how article 3 of the Voluntary Associations Act prohibiting voluntary associations seeking to foment racial and religious division was implemented in practice and how it related to the other provisions on incitement. It would be interesting to learn whether actions had to reach a certain threshold before the Act was applied. He would welcome information on any cases in which the Act had been applied.

36. While some 30 pieces of the State party's domestic legislation included an element of racial discrimination, the Committee advocated that a single law on that issue provided clarity and clearer alignment with international standards. That was of benefit to citizens who could thus be aware of their rights and responsibilities in that area.

37. While commending the significant involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the preparation of the periodic report, it was regrettable that none had been able to travel to Geneva to address the Committee directly. In future, it would be valuable to be briefed by Uzbek NGOs. He also noted that national human rights institutions were sometimes present during the consideration of State party reports, offering a supportive but critical counterpoint to the views of the delegation.

38. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that article 156 of the Criminal Code on incitement to ethnic, racial or religious hatred prohibited the establishment of political parties on ethnic, racial or religious bases. In July 2010, the Government had held an international round table with the deputy director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to discuss the issue of improving legislation on political parties and NGOs. Mr. Thornberry was indeed right that there had to be a threshold, and his Government was keen to ensure that its legislation was consistent with international standards.

39. The number of NGOs in the country was high owing to the fact that NGOs registered with the Ministry of Justice, and their subsidiaries had to register at provincial level. The Government would welcome more dialogue with NGOs and fully supported their increased participation in the United Nations reporting process. To that end, it had suggested that OSCE should run training sessions for NGOs on writing alternative reports for United Nations treaty bodies. In 2008, a parliamentary commission had been established to support NGOs and other civil society organizations, with particular focus on providing financial assistance to such bodies.

40. The Government had been considering introducing a specific law on racial discrimination into its domestic legislation. He would present the Committee's views on that issue to Parliament.

41. **Mr. Lindgren Alves** said that, in the Committee's opinion, racial discrimination existed in every country. In some countries it was an obvious and institutionalized phenomenon, while in others it was hidden.

42. According to the information provided by the Government, the Roma population was sedentary, frequently intermarried with other ethnic groups and mostly spoke Uzbek. Most individuals considered themselves to be Uzbeks or Tajiks. In that case, should they be considered as Roma at all? There was no need to create a "Roma problem" where none existed.

43. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that people identified themselves as Roma, Tajiks or Uzbeks, as they chose, when applying for a passport or residence permit. He agreed that, while there was no institutionalized racial discrimination in his country, there were cases of hidden discrimination, as there were in all countries. In the near future, his Government planned to focus on hidden discrimination against women.

44. **Mr. de Gouttes** asked whether the Convention or another international human rights treaty had been cited as the basis for a decision of a domestic court. He was pleased to see that Uzbekistan had abolished capital punishment and that training in human rights law had been arranged for judges and lawyers. The requirement for new Supreme Court judges to be proposed by the President and then confirmed by Parliament provided a valuable extra guarantee, but had a candidate ever, in fact, been rejected?

45. The Government's willingness to consider acceding to the individual complaints procedure provided for in article 14 of the Convention was commendable. He foresaw no difficulty, since Uzbekistan had already made the equivalent declaration in respect of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. He noted with satisfaction that the Government was also considering the adoption of a specific law banning racial discrimination.

46. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said he hoped that his country would set a good example to many others by accepting the individual complaints procedure. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had recommended that Uzbekistan should adopt a law on gender equality: the Government was therefore considering the possibility of adopting a single law banning all types of discrimination. The President's candidates for senior judicial posts had indeed sometimes been rejected by the Committee on Legislation

and Judiciary Issues of the Senate – including, on one occasion, a proposed Minister of Justice. The courts had not, as yet, cited the Convention directly in their decisions, since training programmes for judges and lawyers had so far concentrated on domestic legislation rather than international treaties. Uzbekistan was grateful for aid from the European Union, amounting to 10 million euros over two years, as part of the European Union and Central Asia Strategy for a New Partnership.

47. **Mr. Avtonomov** noted that the State party had sent a very high-level delegation to the current session, headed by the Director of the National Human Rights Centre, which was a ministerial-level post. The Centre dealt with promotion of the whole range of human rights, all of which were considered by the Committee in the context of racial discrimination. It was unfortunate that NGOs had been unable to attend the session: however, it was common for those organizations to suffer severe financial constraints, and they could sometimes, with considerable difficulty, obtain funding for travel to Geneva.

48. He asked whether the Government was in favour of proposals to promote the adoption of a common Turkic language in Central Asia. The question was of interest to his country, the Russian Federation, which was home to a large number of Turkic peoples. In his own opinion, however, the various Turkic languages were too far apart, many being mutually incomprehensible.

49. He was gratified by the delegation's acknowledgement that hidden discrimination against the Roma might indeed occur in Uzbekistan, as it did in many other places – an acknowledgement which States parties were not always willing to make. However, there was no need to portray the problem as being more serious than it really was.

50. He asked whether cooperation between Uzbekistan and UNHCR in the care of refugees from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan was based on a formal agreement, noting that Uzbekistan was not a party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951. What were the legal requirements for claiming refugee status?

51. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that a bill had been prepared which would, in practice, implement the basic provisions of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol. The various political parties were now discussing the bill before it was submitted to Parliament. The issue of formal accession to the Convention and Protocol was under consideration in various Government ministries. His Government had collaborated with UNHCR for 15 years in the care of refugees, but there was no formal legal basis for the cooperation.

52. Uzbekistan collaborated closely with many United Nations human rights bodies, and had submitted reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Human Rights Committee during 2010.

53. The idea of a common Turkic language had first been mooted by Kemal Atatürk in Turkey in the 1920s. The proposal had been intended to bring the Turkic peoples closer together, just as a common Arabic written language had helped to unite the Arab peoples. At that point, the Uzbek language had been written in Arabic script: since then, it had changed to the roman alphabet, then to Cyrillic and then back to the roman alphabet, which was the one currently in use. Many Uzbek words appeared in other languages, including Hungarian and some Indian languages.

54. No alternative report had been presented at the current session, but such reports had been submitted to the other human rights bodies. The legislation creating the post of Ombudsman had recently been passed by the upper chamber of Parliament. Uzbekistan would attend the 10th International Conference of National Human Rights Institutions, to be held in Edinburgh, United Kingdom, in the autumn of 2010.

55. Uzbekistan collaborated extensively with the United Nations treaty bodies. In 2010 alone, its reports had been considered by the present Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Human Rights Committee, and two further reports had been submitted, to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. He welcomed the suggestion made earlier in the session that the general comments and recommendations issued by the treaty bodies should be compiled into a single publication. They were very important for activities at both national and regional level, and at present it was difficult to gain an overview of such a large volume of material.

56. **Mr. Aytonomov** had highlighted the importance of regional human rights activities. Uzbekistan was party to the Minsk Convention of 22 January 1993 on the provision of judicial assistance and legal relations in civil, family and criminal matters, and to instruments adopted by the Council of Europe and OSCE.

57. It was true, as members had pointed out, that his delegation included no women, but he could assure the Committee that his country's delegation to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, for example, included many more women.

58. **Mr. Shigabudinov** (Uzbekistan) said that his country's collaboration with UNHCR was based on a "gentlemen's agreement" which had worked very effectively over the years.

59. **The Chairperson**, speaking in his personal capacity, asked whether the alphabets used earlier in Uzbekistan's history, especially Arabic script, were taught in schools. If not, there was a danger that young people would be cut off from large parts of their country's heritage. Of course, it was important for them to learn the roman alphabet as well, which was the vehicle of scientific information worldwide.

60. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that, in fact, the problem affected all generations: older people in his country had been left functionally illiterate by the change to an alphabet other than the one in which they had been educated. The roman alphabet was the one now in use, despite strong arguments for a return to Arabic script in view of the tradition of cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara as centres of Islamic civilization. Russian was the first foreign language taught in schools, followed by English, French and German. Universities now used both the roman and Cyrillic alphabets in roughly equal proportions, while schools tended to use the roman alphabet.

61. **Mr. Peter** observed, from statistics provided by the delegation, that the number of women among those appointed to the Senate of the Oliy Majlis by the President had fallen from 4 out of 12 in 2005 to 2 out of 12 in 2010, and sought clarification from the delegation in that regard.

62. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) observed that redressing the gender imbalance in public institutions was a complex and difficult process, but that the Government was committed to improving both the human rights situation in general and the gender balance step by step. Although the number of women appointed to the Senate by the President had indeed decreased, the overall proportion of women in parliament had remained steady, and an encouraging number of women were employed within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the diplomatic service, including two female ambassadors. Political parties were required to fill a 33 per cent quota of women on their candidate lists, which had helped to increase the number of women in parliament.

63. **The Chairperson** noted that, even in States with a long history of democracy, there was frequently a serious gender imbalance in government and parliament. Furthermore, some women objected to nomination or quota systems and were reluctant to participate in them.

64. **Ms. Crickley** (Country Rapporteur) asked what measures were being taken to ensure equitable access to employment for members of minorities, whether procedures existed to prevent discrimination in the recruitment process, whether there was a process for analysing the situation, and whether any penalties existed for failure to ensure equal treatment. Concerning incitement to hatred, she requested information about the number of cases brought under the relevant provision of the Criminal Code and their outcome. She asked whether the national human rights institution of Uzbekistan was accredited with the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions.

65. With regard to women from minority groups, she reiterated the request she had made at the previous meeting for information on various issues, particularly the need to ensure that patients understood any medical procedures they might undergo and to provide education on rights relating to marriage and choice of partner. Lastly, she enquired whether any protection existed for victims of trafficking.

66. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) said that his country had ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2008. National legislation had subsequently been adopted, inter alia setting out a national action plan to combat trafficking, and an interdepartmental commission had been established, including representatives of State bodies, NGOs, civil society and the media. It had so far examined the situation in more than half of the country's provinces, focusing on the incidence of trafficking and return and rehabilitation of victims. A national rehabilitation centre had opened in Tashkent for women, men and children who had been victims of trafficking and who often experienced psychological trauma and other health problems as a result of their experiences. The 2009 annual report of the United States Department of State on human rights practices had commented positively on the various measures taken in Uzbekistan to prevent and punish trafficking and rehabilitate victims.

67. Under Uzbek legislation, marriage was considered a voluntary act between equal partners. Religious marriage ceremonies were not recognized, and forced and underage marriage was prohibited. Incidences of both occurred, but the Government was taking steps to address the problem. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had recommended that the minimum age for marriage, currently 17 for women and 18 for men, be made the same for both sexes.

68. He drew attention to the fact that statistics on the number of ethnic minority women in parliament had been provided to the Secretariat.

69. In the wake of the global economic crisis, employment presented a serious problem, although gross domestic product had remained above 8 per cent. In 2009, over 900 jobs had been created; more were planned for 2010. An employment programme had been approved by both chambers of parliament. With a view to promoting home-based employment and thereby improving access to employment for women, better working conditions for handicrafts workers had been introduced, ensuring not only payment but also benefits and pensions.

70. Uzbekistan had ratified 13 important ILO conventions, including the Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182), in which respect an action plan and monitoring system had been introduced to prevent violations. The country participated regularly in the International Labour Conference and had attended The Hague Global Child Labour Conference in May 2010.

71. **Ms. Crickley** (Country Rapporteur), summing up, highlighted various issues to which the Committee would give particular attention in preparing its concluding observations, such as the importance of self-identification, the relationship between international and domestic law, minority languages, the need for statistical reform, stateless

persons, and the fact that the State party had not yet made a declaration in accordance with article 14 of the Convention. The lack of participation by NGOs from Uzbekistan in the work of the Committee and reports of a deterioration in the situation of ethnic minority women were matters of particular disappointment and concern.

72. The recent influx of refugees from Kyrgyzstan had led to positive engagement between Uzbekistan and UNHCR, and protection had been afforded to those displaced. Nevertheless, it was important for such arrangements to be formalized, and the State party should consider acceding to relevant international instruments.

73. She welcomed the engagement of the delegation of Uzbekistan in dialogue with the Committee and the way in which the State party had approached its obligations under international treaties, particularly in view of the difficulties faced by any newly independent country. Its periodic reports and other information had been submitted in a timely manner, while its abolition of the death penalty in 2008 and subsequent stance on the issue set an example to other States. The country's involvement with other international organizations was also welcome. The next challenge for the State party would be to ensure that the various programmes and action plans it had developed, for instance with regard to the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action, were implemented effectively.

74. **The Chairperson** expressed gratitude for the sincere efforts of the delegation of Uzbekistan to respond to the Committee's questions. The human rights situation in a country could not be changed overnight, but good progress had been made, and further engagement with the various treaty bodies would improve matters further.

75. **Mr. Saidov** (Uzbekistan) expressed appreciation for the open, constructive and professional dialogue held with the Committee, and for the understanding shown towards his country as a young State. In terms of human rights and racial discrimination, no State was perfect, and he welcomed the focus on the progress achieved.

76. All of the more than 100,000 Kyrgyz refugees who had flooded into Uzbekistan a few months previously had been protected by the Government while they remained in Uzbekistan and had now voluntarily returned to their native land. However, the legacy of Stalin's nationalities policy would continue to cause problems in the region, and all concerned must work to prevent inter-ethnic conflict.

77. The dialogue with the Committee and its concluding observations would be widely publicized and discussed. More would be done to implement the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action and the State party's core document would be updated. In order to promote the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the treaty body process, training would be provided to leaders of such organizations in how to prepare alternative reports. In the hope of continued dialogue, he invited the Committee to visit Uzbekistan to see the situation on the ground.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.