



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 2942nd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 24 November 2022, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Shepherd

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

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

Combined ninth and tenth periodic reports of Georgia (continued)
([CERD/C/GEO/9-10](#); [CERD/C/GEO/Q/9-10](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Georgia joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Balcerzak** (Country Rapporteur) said that it would be useful to know whether the Supreme Court had provided any interpretations of the meaning of the State party's criminal law provisions on racial discrimination, or whether they were sufficiently clear for domestic courts to apply them independently. At the previous meeting ([CERD/C/SR.2941](#)), the delegation had referred to a case of discrimination brought before the court in Kobuleti by the Public Defender of Georgia in 2018 involving the local authorities' failure to supply water to a school for Muslim children. He wondered whether there were other cases of discrimination in which the courts had upheld the Public Defender's request to enforce her recommendations. He also wished to know whether the public and lawyers in Georgia were aware of the possibility of submitting individual communications to the Committee.
3. He asked when the next census would be taken and whether there were updated statistics on the number of non-citizens in the State party since the previous one. In particular, it would be good to have information on the number of Russians who had arrived in the country since the start of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and how many had remained, and whether their arrival had caused any problems. It would be interesting to hear whether non-citizens still enjoyed the right to remain in Georgia for one year, and what happened after that period had elapsed.
4. He wished to know whether adequate measures had been adopted to ensure access to public health information, testing and vaccination during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic for migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons. He also wondered how access to fair, transparent and efficient asylum procedures was guaranteed for persons in need of international protection. In particular, given that Syrians were very often denied asylum on grounds of national security, he wished to have detailed information on how the Ministry of Internal Affairs determined whether asylum-seekers posed a threat to national security, and also whether any recent Russian immigrants had applied for asylum. It would be useful to hear an update on the plans to grant free legal representation to asylum-seekers in administrative proceedings and how such representation was currently provided.
5. The State party appeared to lack a specific procedure through which stateless persons could obtain Georgian citizenship, and clarification was needed as to whether the residency requirement for citizenship had been shortened from 10 to 5 years for stateless persons, as planned, along with how the necessary conditions were created for them to obtain citizenship and for children born in Georgia who would otherwise be stateless to be identified.
6. According to the State party report, 494 persons who enjoyed repatriate status had been granted citizenship without having to renounce that of another State. It was unfair, therefore, that members of the community that had been forcibly displaced from the territory during Soviet era were required to present a document attesting to their renunciation of citizenship of other countries. Such a requirement might create obstacles to their applications for citizenship. Moreover, according to the Public Defender, the Strategy on Repatriation of Persons Involuntarily Displaced by the Former USSR from the Georgian SSR in the 1940s applied only to persons with repatriate status or Georgian citizenship. It would therefore be helpful to have an account of the measures taken to expedite the process of repatriation of the victims of forced displacement, notably the members of the large Meskhetian community, who had encountered serious difficulties in acquiring citizenship, and of any awareness-raising campaigns in place to facilitate their access to citizenship, education, employment and health care.
7. **Mr. Guissé** (Country Task Force) said that updated information on the composition of the Georgian population would be welcome. The concentration of ethnic minorities in certain areas might hinder their access to education and other services. The Committee had

been informed that the State party's new State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration did not involve significant legislative, institutional or policy change, and he would be interested to hear the delegation's comments on the improvements brought about by the new strategy in comparison with its predecessor, particularly in terms of legislative and institutional change, as well as on reports that the representation of ethnic minorities in the parliament and municipal authorities did not reflect the composition of the population. He would also welcome information on ethnic minorities' representation in the executive branch, the legislature, political parties, public bodies and local authorities, and on any adopted or planned measures to increase their political participation, including under the new strategy.

8. He wished to know how the State party ensured ethnic minorities' access to quality health care, especially in rural areas. While he welcomed the introduction of a State programme on the development of employment support services that would primarily benefit ethnic minorities, as well as other training programmes targeting vulnerable groups, it would be good to know how many persons from ethnic minorities had participated in those programmes and how many persons had subsequently found employment. In the light of reports of extremely low living standards in areas with large ethnic minority populations, details of the measures adopted to reduce economic inequality and protect those populations' incomes, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, would be welcome.

9. Ethnic minorities reportedly faced significant challenges in access to quality education. The preschool enrolment rate among ethnic Azerbaijani children in particular was very low, and many ethnic minority children left basic education without having mastered the Georgian language, preventing them from accessing higher education, employment and public services. He therefore wished to have information on ethnic minorities' access to quality education and higher education, the major inequalities in access to education and education outcomes experienced by ethnic minority children, particularly ethnic Azerbaijani children, and whether the State party believed that special measures would be an appropriate means of addressing those challenges.

10. While he appreciated the State party's work to improve education for Roma children, and on other matters affecting the Roma, it would be good to know what measures had been adopted to address the reported shortcomings in efforts to improve that community's access to identity documents and to integrate Roma children into the education system. He would also welcome information on the prevention of forced and child marriage among ethnic minority groups, including the Roma, and on the application of article 150¹ of the Criminal Code, under which committing the crime of forced marriage against a minor was an aggravating circumstance, given that child marriage reportedly persisted in most ethnic groups.

11. **Ms. Ali Al-Misnad** said that she wished to learn more about efforts to improve the political representation of ethnic minorities in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions and to enhance the Georgian language skills of ethnic minority students so as to accelerate their integration into society, socioeconomic status, access to higher education and positions in government and politics.

12. **Mr. Diaby** said that he wished to know whether there was a specific law on the protection of human rights defenders. He also wished to know how many of the 10 actions to end statelessness set out in the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014–2024 had been implemented by the State party. One of those actions, preventing statelessness in cases of State succession, was of particular relevance to the State party as a former Soviet republic.

13. **Mr. Amir** said that it would be interesting to hear whether secondary school pupils were taught about the State party's Soviet history and its transition to independence. He would also like to hear how the country's past influenced its current experience of racial discrimination, particularly with regard to the Ukrainians of Russian origin who lived in Georgia.

14. **Mr. Balcerzak** said that the Committee would be interested to know more about the country's response to the arrival of Ukrainian nationals in light of the humanitarian catastrophe produced by the Russian aggression.

15. Reports had indicated that Georgians of Azerbaijani descent were currently excluded from the right to change their surnames because the nature of the country's civil registry archives meant that members of that community were unable to fulfil the requirement of providing documentary proof of their ancestral surname. It had also been reported that a 2021 petition in support of a bill to allow ethnic Azerbaijanis and other ethnic groups to remove or alter Russian endings from their surnames had been rejected, and that an alternative bill on the right to change surnames that had inauthentic, ahistorical suffixes had instead been proposed in May 2022. More information on the issue would be appreciated.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at 11.05 a.m.

16. **Ms. Totladze** (Georgia) said that work was under way to update the common core document. The Ministry of Justice conducted information campaigns to raise awareness of the Committee's individual complaint procedures. A report on the execution of decisions made by the United Nations treaty bodies had also been made public.

17. Georgia supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. The two countries faced similar security challenges, with Georgia experiencing full-scale Russian military aggression in 2008 and its attempt to forcibly change the borders of a sovereign State. Georgia had been demonstrating its solidarity by providing substantial humanitarian assistance to Ukraine since the beginning of the war. Accommodation had been provided for 30,000 Ukrainians living in Georgia as a result of the war, and \$7 million of public money distributed to them. An additional \$7 million was pledged by the end of 2022. The Ministry of Education had introduced a simplified enrolment procedure to help Ukrainian pupils continue their education in Georgian schools, often in line with the Ukrainian curriculum and taught in the Ukrainian language. Lastly, her Government had arranged free holiday travel and accommodation for Ukrainian families with children as part of its holiday programme, and museums and other attractions and public transport were free of charge to Ukrainian citizens.

18. **A representative of Georgia** said that hate speech was currently not regulated in the online media, and was only self-regulated in the traditional media. There was no regulatory authority or court with jurisdiction on the matter. In order to bring the country's legislation into line with international standards and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, a draft law on broadcasting was currently going through the parliament. Once adopted, it would make it possible to tackle hate speech in both the traditional and online media.

19. **A representative of Georgia** said that the discrimination case brought by Public Defender was the only recent example of its kind. That was possibly because litigation was a path rarely favoured by Public Defenders, since it allowed the possibility of potentially costly appeals.

20. **A representative of Georgia**, noting that the term of office of the current Public Defender would expire in December, said that preparations for the election of the next one had been undertaken in a transparent, inclusive and fair manner in full accordance with the Paris Principles, the Belgrade principles on the relationship between national human rights institutions and parliaments, Council of Europe guidelines and Venice Commission guidelines. Civil society organizations had been involved in the process and the public was well informed about the candidates. As no single party in the parliament had enough votes by law to elect the Public Defender on its own, the ruling party had invited the opposition to put forward a list of at least seven candidates for the position and would select one from among them, while it would not put forward its own nominees.

21. **A representative of Georgia** said that the effectiveness of the Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department was demonstrated by the increase from 775 cases involving a discriminatory motive in 2019 to 1,703 cases in 2021. The Government intended to train a number of investigators to specialize in crimes involving intolerance and discrimination, rather than handing investigative power in such matters to any single department. The efficiency and quality of investigations would increase as a result.

22. **A representative of Georgia** said that reforms over the past decade had given the judiciary increased independence, accountability and transparency and introduced the

lifetime appointment of judges. The recruitment and appointment of judges in first instance, appellate and supreme (highest instance) courts was now closely regulated. First and second instance court judges were selected and appointed by the High Council of Justice of Georgia, which substantiated decisions on its appointments and published them on its website. The appointment of Supreme Court judges had been comprehensively overhauled, with candidates selected by the Council based on their integrity and competence, and interviewed in public. Written justifications of decisions made by the High Council of Justice were also made public. The best candidates were given a public hearing in front of the parliamentary committee. Those who received a majority of votes from the parliament were appointed to the Supreme Court.

23. To date, the Supreme Court had not been called upon to give an interpretation of the application of the provisions of criminal law regarding racial discrimination.

24. **A representative of Georgia** said that the legislative and institutional framework of international protection had been strengthened in recent years. At present, 499 refugees and 1,011 persons with leave to remain on humanitarian grounds, or humanitarian status holders, enjoyed international protection. In 2021, 743 asylum-seekers had sought international protection. In comparison, 1,111 applications for international protection had been made in the first nine months of 2022 alone, most by citizens of Ukraine, Türkiye and Iran. Since 2012, Georgia had received approximately 12,000 asylum-seekers, granting international protection to more than 2,000.

25. Applications for international protection were examined impartially. A range of relevant information and documentation was taken into consideration, including events in the applicants' country of origin both before and after their departure and the likelihood that the applicants would be at risk of harm if they returned. Interpretation services were provided in the asylum-seekers' native language or in a language they understood throughout the process. The decision reached was communicated in writing, along with the reasoning behind it.

26. Article 69 of the Law on International Protection indicated that a potential threat to the State security of Georgia could be used to justify the rejection of asylum applications, subject to appeal within one month. The court and the Public Defender had full access to national security information used as grounds to refuse international protection.

27. Russian citizens were entitled to stay in Georgia for up to one year. Since the start of the war in Ukraine, 78,000 Russian citizens had entered the country, and 72,000 had left. Ninety applications for international protection had been received in that period and were under consideration. At the same time, 12,000 Ukrainians had entered Georgia and 11,000 had left.

28. **A representative of Georgia** said that Georgia treated human rights as a matter of top priority. In addition to creating a working group on statelessness under the State Commission on Migration Issues, Georgia had joined the campaign to end statelessness within a decade launched by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and had drawn up a draft action plan to fulfil its aims. The number of stateless persons in the country had dropped from 1,619 in 2012 to 524 in 2022, including 227 males and 297 females.

29. Progress had been made on all six pledges made at the high-level segment on statelessness in October 2019. The fee for statelessness determination procedures had been abolished altogether, improving on the pledge made at the high-level segment to halve it. A door-to-door campaign to identify and document stateless persons had begun in April 2022, with 26 persons documented so far. With respect to the naturalization of stateless persons, information brochures on how to acquire Georgian citizenship had been published in seven languages and distributed in the relevant regions. A public awareness campaign had also been launched in 2022. She trusted that the pledge to introduce legislative amendments aimed at reducing the residency period required for naturalization from 10 years to 5 would be fulfilled in the near future. Lastly, in order to help persons claiming statelessness status enjoy free legal aid, a draft law and amendments to existing provisions were being developed.

30. **A representative of Georgia** said that a number of State institutions, including the National Statistics Office, were working together to develop a census methodology to ensure

that human rights issues, including those related to ethnic minorities, would be addressed in the 2024 census. Under the Law of Georgia on Personal Data Protection, data on racial and ethnic origin were classed as a special category of data that could only be processed with the subject's written consent. The collection of such data depended on self-identification, which made it difficult for State institutions to collect reliable data on ethnicity, as people were often reluctant to provide such information.

31. The State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021–2030 would continue to focus on the priorities set out in the previous strategy, in particular equality, participation in civic life and the social integration of minorities. The new strategy had been developed through a transparent process with the active involvement of civil society groups, ethnic minority representatives and international experts, including the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In addition to its key priorities, the new strategy contained a greater emphasis on the empowerment of young people and women than the previous strategy. To ensure its effective implementation, a newly established government commission met twice a year to facilitate coordination among relevant State institutions and to consult with stakeholders, including representatives of ethnic minorities. Furthermore, a series of indicators had been developed to allow progress on its objectives to be monitored. Funding had been allocated to the State institutions responsible for the strategy's implementation; for instance, for the period 2021 to 2022, the Government had allocated 1.5 million Georgian lari to support the introduction of bilingual education in preschools, 10.5 million lari to general education, over 3.5 million lari to Georgian language-learning programmes and over 500 million lari to infrastructure projects in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities.

32. Ethnic minorities were able to receive education in their native language in Georgia. There were more than 100 preschools and some 300 general educational institutions at which the language of instruction was not Georgian, which made up nearly 14 per cent of the public schools across the country. A bilingual education programme was being piloted in 15 preschools and 41 schools in the multicultural regions of Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe–Javakheti, and new preschools were being built in villages with large ethnic minority populations. On request, speakers of certain minority languages could be taught in small groups, and teachers of ethnic minorities were increasingly being employed in areas with large ethnic minority populations. The number of students enrolled in a programme aimed at widening access to higher education for ethnic minorities had increased fivefold since the programme's inception. Ethnic minorities could also benefit from various State-funded vocational education programmes, which had included a Georgian language-learning component since 2020. Georgian language courses had been expanded to cover a wider geographical area and were available free-of-charge to all through the regional training centres, mobile units and distance-learning platform of the Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration.

33. To increase access to information among ethnic minorities, an Internet portal available in seven languages had been launched under the auspices of the Georgian public broadcaster. Live news and other programmes were transmitted through regional television channels in Armenian and Azeri and newspapers in those languages were published with the aid of State support. The public broadcaster also had the obligation to promote ethnic minority language programmes. The Government had carried out several large-scale awareness-raising campaigns in recent years; in particular, during the COVID-19 pandemic, ethnic minorities had been provided with timely access to necessary information and services and subsistence allowances. The Government's COVID-19 Internet portal had been made available in seven languages, printed and audiovisual materials in minority languages had been disseminated and a support hotline operating in Armenian and Azeri had been established. The State also promoted the culture of ethnic minorities through support provided to theatres, museums, cultural centres and events, which also served to strengthen intercultural dialogue.

34. Ethnic minorities enjoyed a high level of political participation in Georgia. In particular, in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions, the representation of ethnic minorities in local government was proportionate to the percentage of the population of those areas and ethnic minorities were adequately represented at municipal civil advisory councils. In 2017, to increase their political participation, the Government launched a public sector

internship programme aimed at ethnic minorities and established public advisory councils at government offices in the Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions.

35. According to the 2014 General Population Census, there were only around 6,500 Roma living in Georgia. The Government's policy was to take a unified approach to supporting all ethnic groups, including the Roma. The Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality was responsible for coordinating that strategy and worked closely with the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues of the Council of Europe. Up to 50 Roma children were currently benefiting from early and preschool education services. In the 2020/21 academic year, only 29 of the 323 registered Roma school students had stopped attending school, and social workers had worked with those children to encourage them to resume their studies. A programme on social rehabilitation developed to support homeless children also supported Roma children; 16 such children had benefited from the programme in 2016 in comparison to 37 children in 2022. The Roma were also able to gain access to health services, since anyone in Georgia could be admitted to medical facilities without the need to provide identification documentation.

36. A Government grant had been awarded to a non-governmental organization helping individuals to submit applications for conditional citizenship under the Law of Georgia on the Repatriation of Persons Involuntarily Displaced by the Former USSR from the Georgian SSR in the 1940s. The individuals who had been granted conditional citizenship had been made aware of the need to renounce any previously held citizenships in order to obtain Georgian citizenship; however, none had yet done so.

37. Marriage before the age of 18 years had been prohibited in all instances in Georgia through the December 2015 amendment to the Civil Code. The Ministry of Internal Affairs was responsible for implementing campaigns to prevent child marriage. Information campaigns and materials were disseminated through television and social media in Georgian, Armenian and Azeri, and, in 2016, the Government had approved a child protection referral mechanism to protect children from all forms of violence, including early and forced marriage, which allowed State institutions to coordinate their work in that area and exchange information. That mechanism would soon be revised on the basis of lessons learned.

38. **A representative of Georgia** said that the national strategy on labour and employment policy for the period 2019–2023 contained a specific section on ensuring labour and employment opportunities for vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities. The strategy was being implemented by the recently established State employment agency, which provided services to all people in Georgia without discrimination. In the final quarter of 2022, over 1,000 local people had been recruited to jobs in the region of Samtskhe–Javakheti. Following a 2019 amendment to Georgian legislation, employers were now obliged to ensure equal opportunities in employment for all citizens of Georgia without discrimination on any basis. The Labour Inspection Service, established in 2015, was mandated to inspect all businesses and investigate labour rights violations in workplaces, including acts of discrimination; however, no such cases of discrimination had yet been reported.

39. **A representative of Georgia** said that the universal health care programme launched in 2013 had significantly improved access to health services in the country. All persons with Georgian identity cards as well as recognized stateless persons, asylum-seekers and persons granted refugee or humanitarian status were also covered by a State programme aimed at treating 23 specific diseases. Telemedicine services were being rolled out in rural areas, in particular those with high populations of ethnic minorities. The Government had also taken proactive measures to protect the health rights of minority groups during the COVID-19 pandemic, including by providing access to information on health services and funding prevention, testing, treatment and immunization activities for Georgian citizens and foreign nationals.

40. **A representative of Georgia** said that there was one Roma student in higher education in Georgia, whose studies were being funded in full by the State. The Government had taken several steps to raise awareness, particularly in the education system, of the importance of anti-discrimination in Georgian society.

41. As education was among the most powerful means of changing discriminatory attitudes in society, Georgia had a rich toolbox in its education system to raise awareness

about discrimination and promote human rights and democratic citizenship among the entire education community, including representatives of ethnic minorities as well as school directors and officers responsible for school safety. Civic education, notably the new subjects “Society and me” and “Our Georgia”, was provided in primary and secondary schools in Georgian and ethnic minority languages to foster civic-mindedness. In addition, a range of programmes were implemented to promote tolerance and prevent bullying, early marriage and discrimination in schools. The Government had developed learning resources and methodologies in close collaboration with international organizations such as the United Nations Children’s Fund and the Council of Europe.

42. **A representative of Georgia** said that the parliament had decided not to debate the bill proposed by the Salam Platform to allow ethnic Azerbaijanis to alter the Russian suffixes to their surnames, in part because it did not cover certain other ethnic minorities and in part because the identities of the 27,000 or so signatories to the petition for the consideration of the bill had been unclear. The Government had drafted a new, alternative bill allowing persons from a range of ethnic groups to alter their surnames and continued to consult with the Salam Platform and other stakeholders on the matter. He trusted that the new bill would be enacted in early 2023.

43. **Mr. Guissé** said that he wished to know what steps the State party was taking to reduce the school dropout rate and to increase the university graduation rate of ethnic minorities in the country. He also wished to know whether the State party planned to increase the rate of employment of ethnic minorities in local authorities, particularly where ethnic minorities accounted for the majority of the local population. For example, in the municipality of Marneuli, ethnic minorities accounted for around 91 per cent of the population but only 38 per cent of employees in the mayor’s office.

44. **Ms. Tebie** said that she would be grateful to know what status was accorded to Russians who remained in Georgia for more than one year.

45. **Ms. Totladze** (Georgia) said that one year was the maximum period that Russians could spend in Georgia without a visa.

46. **A representative of Georgia** said that the school dropout rate was high among ethnic Georgians as well as among minorities, as some students left school to take up seasonal employment. Social workers were assigned to the families of pupils who had been absent from school for 20 days or more to encourage those children to resume their education.

47. The level of representation of ethnic minorities in local authorities varied from one election to the next. In an effort to provide for balanced representation of ethnic minorities, the Government had established councils within the governors’ and mayors’ offices, which were staffed with representatives of ethnic minorities, including ethnic Azeris in the municipality of Marneuli, who made up some 90 per cent of the council. The councils, which had been set up in two regions, worked with the municipal or regional authorities and participated in the deliberations and decision-making process.

48. **A representative of Georgia** said that legal aid was available to foreign nationals and stateless persons who met certain criteria established by law. Legal aid for asylum-seekers covered representation in judicial proceedings. A bill for the provision of legal aid to asylum-seekers in administrative proceedings – drafted by the Legal Aid Service in collaboration with UNHCR – had been submitted to the parliament for consideration. Since 2021, the Legal Aid Service had established around 30 legal consultation centres and two branch offices in the country, including in municipalities with large ethnic minority communities. By the end of 2022, the Legal Aid Service planned to open an office in the Bolnisi municipality, the majority of whose inhabitants were ethnic Azeris. Over the past three years, the Legal Aid Service had conducted around 240 outreach campaigns to disseminate information on legal aid at the local level.

49. **Ms. Ali Al-Misnad** said that she wished to know why the number of students enrolled in a programme aimed at widening access to higher education for ethnic minorities had increased fivefold. She wondered whether it was because those students had become proficient in the Georgian language or because they had taken their final exams in their native languages.

50. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that, since gender-based violence continued to be a serious concern in the State party, she would like to know what efforts were being made to improve women's access to sexual and reproductive health services as a means of contributing to their empowerment and emancipation. Secondly, she wondered whether the State party might consider reducing the number of signatures required for the consideration of bills such as that submitted by the Salam Platform.

51. **Mr. Diaby** said that if, as he understood, foreign nationals were required to renounce their citizenship of origin in order to apply for Georgian citizenship, he was curious to know what safeguards were in place to prevent those persons from becoming stateless if their applications were rejected, or if their Georgian citizenship was revoked.

52. **A representative of Georgia** said that, by law, every citizen was entitled to put forward proposals to the legislature, which it was required to consider. However, where 25,000 or more citizens signed a petition for draft legislation to be initiated, then the parliament must formally debate that bill in several stages, much as it did for bills drafted and submitted by the Government.

53. **Mr. Balcerzak** said that he was grateful to the delegation for its engagement and its constructive comments. The State party had made noteworthy progress towards eliminating racism. Indeed, the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination was very well drafted. A continuing effort must be made to implement such legislation and to address growing problems such as the spread of hate speech and racism on social media networks and online forums. The State party was to be congratulated on its recent election to the Human Rights Council for 2023–2025.

54. **Ms. Totladze** (Georgia) said that her Government appreciated the Committee's questions and comments and would incorporate its recommendations into future programmes and policies, including a new action plan for the protection of human rights that was currently under discussion. She also appreciated the input of civil society organizations and the Public Defender's Office. Georgia remained committed to protecting human rights and would continue to collaborate closely with the Committee and other human rights treaty bodies to that end.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.