



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

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Summary record of the 2075th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 2 March 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Kemal

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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

Fourth and fifth periodic reports of Lithuania (CERD/C/LTU/4-5; CERD/C/LTU/Q/4-5; HRI/CORE/1/Add.97)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Lithuania took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Liauškienė** (Lithuania) said that while ethnic minorities accounted for less than 20 per cent of the population, they remained an integral part of her country's multicultural identity.
3. The achievement of independence in 1990 had precipitated a wide range of measures aimed at combating intolerance and racial discrimination. Lithuania had ratified all the core human rights instruments and had taken steps to align its national legislation with international human rights standards on non-discrimination.
4. In 2007, Lithuania had welcomed Mr. Doudou Diène, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Government had given due attention to the concerns of the Special Rapporteur and had since adopted the necessary measures to give effect to the recommendations listed in his report.
5. The principle of non-discrimination was enshrined in the Lithuanian Constitution and was consistently applied in areas such as employment, social protection, education and culture. Moreover, national legislation contained provisions prohibiting all forms of discrimination.
6. Lithuania's accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004 had prompted the adoption of measures to align national legislation with the Union's *acquis*. The resultant legislative amendments had helped to enhance Government anti-discrimination policy by increasing criminal liability for hate crimes under the Criminal Code. Previously, the Criminal Code had classified racist attacks not as racist crimes but as crimes against human life, health or public order. In order to afford greater protection to the victims of racially-motivated crime, the Criminal Code had been amended to classify racial motivation as an aggravating circumstance.
7. The Criminal Code had been further amended to criminalize the production, possession, distribution or public display of racist information, and also the establishment of racist organizations. The amendments had been justified on the grounds that the fostering of national, racial, religious or social hatred, violence or discrimination was incompatible with the right to freedom of expression.
8. In an effort to ensure the effective implementation of anti-discrimination legislation, a number of training courses on the legislation prohibiting racial discrimination had been organized for police officers. Specific training was also provided for judges, prosecutors and lawyers on the procedure for assessing cases of racial, ethnic, religious, and gender-based discrimination and on the effective application of all international instruments.
9. In view of the reluctance of some victims to file a complaint with the competent authorities, a new version of the Equal Treatment Act had been adopted to further safeguard their rights. The Act afforded victims increased procedural guarantees, which had included the shifting of the burden of proof and the right to claim financial and moral damages from the defendant.

10. A further amendment to protect the rights of victims of discrimination had empowered associations or other entities to represent them in judicial or administrative proceedings.

11. While hate crime did occur in Lithuania, the number of cases remained small. Data provided by the Prosecutor General's Office had recorded falling numbers of pretrial investigations initiated for hate crime over the period 2008–2010. The competent authorities followed up hate crime promptly, initiating a pretrial investigation and imposing the penalties prescribed under the Criminal Code.

12. In view of the fact that the majority of hate crimes were perpetrated online, the Provision of Information to the Public Act had been amended to grant additional powers to the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics to determine whether public information disseminated by the media constituted incitement to discrimination. Taking into account the attendant difficulty in identifying perpetrators of such offences, the Prosecutor General's Office had issued practical guidelines to police officers engaged in pretrial investigations.

13. According to the 2001 census, Lithuania was home to 115 national minorities. The Government's policy on national minorities aimed to facilitate their integration and to encourage their active participation in all areas of society while protecting their individual cultural and religious identities. The policy focused primarily on the education of national minorities and had established the national language as the language of instruction in schools. Furthermore, a number of State-run language courses had been organized in regions with a large proportion of national minorities in an effort to promote the national language.

14. In the light of the problems faced by members of national minorities when seeking employment because they were not proficient in Lithuanian, the Education Bill would make compulsory the teaching of a number of subjects in Lithuanian in national minority schools so as to facilitate their entry into the labour market.

15. In October 2007, the Government had adopted the long-term National Minorities Policy Development Strategy to facilitate the integration of national minorities into the social, political and economic life of the country.

16. As the Roma remained one of the most disadvantaged minority groups in Lithuania, the policy on national minorities gave priority to Roma issues. While the Government had implemented three integration policies to address issues such as Roma exclusion, education and health care and to preserve their culture and traditions, the community still faced many problems in those areas. In order to reduce unemployment within the Roma community, the Vilnius labour exchange had organized several events at the Roma Community Centre with the purpose of providing information on employment opportunities.

17. In addition, education programmes had been implemented to facilitate the integration of Roma children into Lithuanian society. To that end, preschool classes had been organized for Roma children aged 6 to 8 to prepare them for the transition to mainstream primary education. The concept of distance learning for Roma adults had been introduced in 2007 and in 2009, scholarships had been awarded to Roma students to promote education among the Roma community. Education played a vital role in the promotion of tolerance. The Lithuanian school curriculum incorporated the fundamentals of civic education, including the principles of human rights and non-discrimination. In addition, a network of education centres had been established to promote tolerance through civic initiatives. In that respect, non-formal education also had a part to play in addressing issues of identity and in fostering a deeper understanding of cultural diversity.

18. Even the most comprehensive anti-discrimination laws would be ineffective if they were not consistently enforced. In an effort to strengthen the provisions contained in those

laws, the Government had implemented anti-discriminatory programmes aimed at raising awareness among the population as a whole and at rooting out all forms of discrimination.

19. The support received from civil society had proved invaluable in the implementation of projects to combat discrimination. Their involvement had demonstrated that initiatives to promote tolerance were no longer the prerogative of the Government alone. Furthermore, both the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had organized awareness-raising activities to coincide with events such as International Africa Day.

20. **Mr. Peter** (Country Rapporteur) said that Lithuania's achievement of independence in 1990 had signalled a turning point in the country's history. The country had raised its international profile by becoming a member of NATO, the Council of Europe and the EU and a party to the Schengen Agreement. It had signed and ratified the core human rights instruments but had yet to declare that it recognized the Committee's competence to receive and consider individual communications under article 14 of the Convention.

21. While the Committee acknowledged that many international human rights instruments had preceded Lithuania's emergence as a sovereign State, it urged the State party to give due consideration to clearing the backlog of instruments it had not yet ratified.

22. Lithuania's good track record in reporting to various human rights treaty bodies was indicative of the high level of seriousness it accorded to its international obligations.

23. Statistics on the composition of the country's population were crucial to the work of the Committee. In its previous concluding observations, the Committee had noted with concern the lack of data relating to the composition of the population and that that shortcoming could impede the Committee's assessment of the progress achieved by the State party in the fight against discrimination. Consequently, the Committee had requested that the State party provide up-to-date, disaggregated information in its next periodic report, together with clarification of the distinction between "ethnic" minority groups and "national" minority groups envisaged in the new National Minorities Bill. The Committee noted with satisfaction that the State party had furnished information on the demographic, ethnic and religious composition of the population, disaggregated by nationality, citizenship and religion in section II (b) of its report. The Committee also appreciated the detailed information on the various minority groups resident in the national territory in table 2 of the annex to the report.

24. He asked the delegation whether, in view of the census scheduled for later in 2011, projections indicated that there might be significant changes in data on the ethnic make-up of the population. In any event, the Committee would welcome updated data when the census results became available.

25. The State party had amended its Criminal Code in response to a recommendation by the Committee that it introduce a provision to make the commission of a racially motivated offence an aggravating circumstance. It had also criminalized the act of desecrating graves or other public sites on racial, national and religious grounds. That did not, however, go far enough towards meeting the aims of the Committee's recommendation. More information on the amendments to the Criminal Code in that context would therefore be welcome.

26. Turning to the State party's Equal Treatment Act, he asked whether debate in the Seimas (parliament) on proposed amendments to the Act aimed at allowing victims of discrimination to claim financial and moral damages had been completed and, if so, with what result. He also wished to know the wording of the proposed amendment. Noting that discrimination cases had been heard in national courts under various articles of the Criminal Code and that there had been several convictions, he asked the delegation to provide details of the articles concerned, as the Committee had been unable to gain access to the text of the

Code. In addition, he would like to see more recent and detailed data, as the information presented in the periodic report dated back to 2007 or earlier.

27. He commended the State party for statistics kept in the Ministry of the Interior's registry of criminal acts, and especially the addition in 2006 of a field in the registry cards on whether the crime concerned had been motivated by intolerance or hatred for persons of another race, nationality, sexual orientation or social status or belonging to any other group. However, the Committee needed to see specific data from that registry and wanted to know if, as predicted in the State party's periodic report, the situation with regard to the availability of statistics had changed radically since the Criminal Code had been amended.

28. Turning to the Provision of Information to the Public Act, he asked whether the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics could investigate alleged violations of provisions of the Act relating to the publication of information inciting racial hatred and whether those responsible could be punished. He also asked whether journalists were encouraged to regulate themselves through their own bodies and so effectively combat racism without need for the intervention of the Inspector.

29. Recalling that the State party had been urged at the closing conference of the European Youth Campaign in 2007 to improve human rights awareness, he asked whether steps had since been taken to implement recommendations made at the conference.

30. The Office of the Equal Rights Ombudsman had authority to investigate cases of discrimination and impose administrative sanctions, but data on its performance since 2007 were lacking and the question whether it had sufficient resources to operate effectively remained unanswered.

31. He questioned the credibility of in-house investigations of alleged police misconduct and sought the views of the delegation in that regard. It would be difficult to persuade society at large that such investigations by the police of its own officers could be fair or impartial. In addition, the involvement of a prosecutor in such investigations came at a late stage, leaving ample time for evidence to be tampered with or removed and thus potentially weakening the case against the police officer under investigation. The Committee would welcome information from the State party on any human rights training received by law enforcement officials aimed at minimizing violations by them of citizen's rights.

32. The National Anti-Discrimination Programme 2006–2008 had been ambitious in its scope, with plans to train employers, police officers and civil servants in the application of the provisions of international anti-discrimination treaties, to study the situation of women of ethnic and national minorities, and to train judges and lawyers with a view to ensuring the more consistent application of the Convention in the justice system. Three years after its conclusion, the Committee was keen to be apprised of the programme's results and any follow-up activities.

33. The Committee would also welcome information on what had been achieved under the Programme of Integration of National Minorities into Lithuanian Society (2005–2010) and its successor, the National Minorities Policy Development Strategy, which had been extended to 2015. Was the new Strategy, to which a budget of €2.3 million had been allocated, bearing fruit? He asked whether full integration of minorities into Lithuanian society could be envisaged by the end of 2015.

34. Citing cases of hate speech and racial violence aimed at ethnic minorities in the State party, among them that of a popular Indian singer who had been assaulted and hospitalized, he asked how the State party dealt with such acts of racism. He noted that persons of African descent were especially targeted by the perpetrators of such acts.

35. With regard to the Programme for the Integration of Roma into Lithuanian Society 2008–2010 and in the light of past recommendations by the Committee that the State party

should avoid policies that isolated the Roma and work to involve them in housing construction and other activities, he asked the delegation whether the Programme and related measures had produced positive results and to what extent the Roma had been integrated into society. The Committee would also appreciate current data on the funds available to facilitate access by the Roma to adequate housing, education, health care and employment. The State party's periodic report addressed issues raised by the Committee but lacked financial data for the period since 2007. He also asked for up-to-date information on the situation in the troubled Kirtimai area of the capital, Vilnius, which was home to a large Roma community, some of whose members had received compensation after their houses had been demolished in the past.

36. With regard to education, he regretted the absence of official statistics on the ethnic origin of schoolchildren, which meant that the specific needs of children from minorities, such as the Roma, might not be met. The Committee would appreciate such data in future. The State party had provided information on measures adopted to promote the integration of Roma children in the public education system but had failed to address the Committee's specific recommendation that steps be taken to ensure that Roma women and girls had access to education. He requested information on how many Roma women and girls were enrolled in school and where. He asked the delegation to provide more education statistics to cover the period since 2007.

37. **Mr. Avtonomov** said that the delay in submission of the periodic report had unfortunately prevented the Committee from keeping track of developments in Lithuania.

38. The report provided a great deal of information about the status of the Roma community. When the Committee had asked during its previous dialogue whether some of the Roma were still nomadic, it had been informed that they were now a settled community. He wished to know, however, whether that was true of the community in the Kirtimai Tabor settlement, since the term "*tabor*" was normally applicable to nomads. Perhaps the community had retained the historic name even after changing its lifestyle.

39. According to paragraph 243 of the report, positive trends had been recorded in Roma school enrolment, but about 75 per cent of children only completed primary education and every eighth child was enrolled in a special-needs school. He asked whether they were sent to such schools because they were deemed to be less gifted on the basis of psychological tests. It would be preferable to integrate Roma children into normal schools, perhaps with provision for special tuition or supplementary language classes. Otherwise the vicious circle of poor educational performance leading to unemployment, low income and housing problems would persist.

40. Noting that the police conducted an annual search for narcotics in the Kirtimai Tabor settlement on the assumption that members of the community were involved in drug trafficking, he asked whether any measures were being taken to divert traffickers from such activities and to facilitate their access to other sources of income. He gathered that the Programme for the Integration of Roma 2008–2010 had achieved some good results. Had a new programme been adopted for the subsequent period? He drew the State party's attention in that connection to the Committee's general recommendation No. 27 on discrimination against Roma.

41. He asked whether there were any Roma police officers. If there were, they might help to offset their community's tendency to distrust the police.

42. Had any action been taken, such as the publication of textbooks, to preserve or revive the Romany language?

43. According to official data, the number of persons belonging to ethnic or national minorities was declining. A particularly sharp downward trend had been recorded, for

instance, in the case of Lithuanian Jews. He asked whether any studies had been undertaken to ascertain the causes of the trend and whether measures were being taken to reverse it.

44. He joined the Country Rapporteur in encouraging Lithuania to make the declaration under article 14 of the Convention. He also enquired about the State party's position on the amendment of article 8, which it had not yet ratified.

45. Lithuanian NGOs had been encouraged to comment on the report. He asked the delegation to pinpoint any changes or clarifications that had been made in the light of NGO comments.

46. He welcomed the disaggregated statistics provided in the annex to the report. Tables 12 and 13 provided data on religious communities of national minorities. However, although table 12 listed the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in the column for 2007, no mention was made of the two churches in table 13 showing numbers of believers. He asked why they had been omitted.

47. Lastly, he drew the State party's attention to the Committee's recommendation No. 32 concerning the meaning and scope of special measures in the Convention since the Roma and other minorities might benefit from such measures.

48. **Mr. de Gouttes** commended the State party for the regularity of its reporting and the excellent quality of the periodic report.

49. The delegation had referred to a number of amendments to the Criminal Code which were consistent with the provisions of article 4 of the Convention, for instance the recognition of racial motivation as an aggravating circumstance and the criminalization of organizations motivated by racial hatred. The new version of the Equal Treatment Act adopted on 17 June 2008 contained a provision on the burden of proof which, according to the State party, established additional guarantees of compliance with the principle of non-discrimination. He was interested in hearing more about the guarantees in question. For instance, could the burden of proof be reversed in civil cases?

50. The delegation had presented figures for pretrial investigations in 2009 and 2010, especially concerning acts of racial hatred committed against Roma, Jews, Poles, Russians and Catholics, frequently via the Internet. He requested further details regarding the number of convictions, the sentences imposed and the compensation awarded. The Committee would be interested in hearing, in particular, about racist acts involving the media, politicians and law enforcement personnel, given that the State was frequently reluctant to prosecute the latter on grounds of self-preservation.

51. While he welcomed the Programme for the Integration of Roma, he drew attention to the report by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance on his visit to Lithuania in 2007 (A/HRC/7/19/Add.4), in which he had expressed concern about the profound discrimination faced by the Roma community, particularly in the fields of employment, education, health care and housing. He had also referred to the marginalization of the Roma, who lived in neighbourhoods that resembled ghettos.

52. He requested additional information about the State party's programmes to combat human trafficking, especially of women and girls.

53. What progress had been made towards the establishment of a national human rights institution compliant with the Paris Principles?

54. The Committee had received a report, dated 24 May 2007, on the State party's follow-up to the Committee's previous concluding observations (CERD/C/LTU/CO/3/Add.1). Paragraph 35 referred to a Constitutional Court ruling to the effect that part of the Citizenship Act was in conflict with the Constitution. A working

group had been set up to analyse issues relating to the concept of Lithuanian citizenship, and he enquired about its findings.

55. **Mr. Diaconu** complimented the State party on its comprehensive report. The data concerning the ethnic composition of the population were particularly useful.

56. Noting that there were just under 5,000 stateless persons in Lithuania, he asked whether they were mainly of Russian origin and/or members of the Roma community and whether any action was being taken to remedy the situation.

57. A number of laws were still at the drafting stage, for instance the bill amending the Equal Treatment Act and a bill on national minorities. He noted with satisfaction the definition of minorities in the report as persons with permanent residence in Lithuania and not just as Lithuanian citizens.

58. He enquired about the results of the Programme for the Integration of Roma 2008–2010. In 2001, the unemployment rates in the Roma community had been 50 per cent for men and 70 per cent for women. What were the corresponding figures today? The electricity supply to Roma residents in the Kirtimai Tabor settlement was cut off in the event of late payment. Had any alternatives to such drastic action been contemplated? If the general public opposed affirmative measures, the Government and NGOs should promote awareness of the need to guarantee decent living standards for all. The police had arrested many Roma residents of Kirtimai Tabor for drug trafficking. Affirmative action focusing on education, health and employment was again a preferable solution to the problem. Many Roma lacked identity papers, which meant that they were denied access to education, health care and social services.

59. According to paragraph 82 of the report, quite a number of sociological and anthropological studies had been carried out into the history, culture, current situation and inter-ethnic relations of national minorities. He asked whether the findings were being taken into account in Government measures.

60. He was surprised to read that racial segregation was defined as a crime against humanity in Lithuanian legislation. While segregation could be imposed by a regime or political party, it could also be due to poverty or simply to a community's desire for togetherness, in other words natural segregation.

61. He noted with satisfaction that all foreigners with permanent-residence status, not just those from EU member States, were entitled to participate in local elections. He also welcomed the fact that national minorities were represented in the Seimas and in municipal councils.

62. Non-traditional religions could be granted State recognition if they enjoyed the support of the general public. How could the authorities tell whether a religious community enjoyed such support? It was, in his view, a highly subjective criterion.

63. According to paragraph 272 of the report, the Collegiate Council of prosecution offices had discussed the Committee's conclusions and recommendations, and the Prosecutor-General had offered advice on their implementation. That was a very laudable measure.

64. He urged the State party to take firm action against manifestations of racism in sport, such as the display of swastikas.

65. The Committee had been informed that in some areas with a large Polish population, for instance in Vilnius, Šalčininkai and Švenčionys, the use of the Polish language alongside Lithuanian was not accepted and that fines had been imposed on local authorities who had refused to remove street signs in Polish. He emphasized the importance of accepting bilingualism.

66. **Mr. Kut** requested additional information on the two smallest communities in Lithuania, the Tartars and the Karaites. Did they face any hardships and, if so, what action was the Government taking to remedy the situation? He enquired in particular about attitudes to the two communities, as reflected in political discourse and the media.

67. **Mr. Lahiri** said that, while he commended the report as a whole, he was somewhat dissatisfied with the data on the composition of societies and communities, particularly those vulnerable to discrimination.

68. Referring to article 4 of the Convention and recommendation No. 12 of the concluding observations issued by the Committee in 2006 (CERD/C/LTU/CO/3), he deplored the continued aggressive manifestations of public prejudice, hate speech and general intolerance. The situation had reached a climax in 2007 and 2008, and the response to such incidents by the law enforcement agencies had been inadequate. In May 2008, for instance, radical fans of the Vilnius basketball club had marched to the sports ground carrying a right-wing extremist symbol (a “white power” fist). The President of the Lithuanian Basketball Federation had not only failed to condemn the incident but in a media interview in October 2008 had referred to the dark-skinned players in the Kaunas City team in extremely insulting terms. During a discussion of dual citizenship in parliament, one member had stated that he did not want negroes to play in Lithuanian national football or basketball teams; the teams should be composed only of Lithuanians. A police investigation into a public display of posters with the slogan “No to the culture of black people” in Klaipeda in 2008 had been inconclusive. Incidents in 2007 had included: assaults on foreign students in Klaipeda; a fight in Vilnius between Lithuanian and Nigerian youths; an attack on a man from Ghana in Vilnius; and the fatal beating of a former Somali student.

69. The Committee had received reports of several anti-Semitic incidents, including one in March 2008 — Lithuanian Independence Day — when a crowd of fascist youths had shouted slogans such as “Kill that little Jew”, “Lithuania for Lithuanians” and “Lithuania without Russians” during a procession. In August 2010, a pig’s head with mock Hasidic-style ear-locks and a black hat had been left on the doorstep of the last remaining pre-Second World War synagogue in Kaunas.

70. While institutions had been set up and legislation enacted to tackle discrimination, it appeared that major budget cuts in 2008 and 2009 had left most of the institutions defunct. Likewise, the 2009–2011 National Anti-Discrimination Programme had received only 10 per cent of its required budget. The State party clearly wished to remedy that situation, which was particularly important given the history of first Russian, then German occupation in the twentieth century, when Lithuania had been used as a testing ground for the extermination of Jews from the State party and abroad. That historical backdrop made it crucial that the Government dealt with continuing anti-Semitism firmly and decisively. A 2010 survey by the Centre for Ethnic Studies had found that over half of Lithuanians did not wish to live near Roma, a large proportion of the population did not want to live near Chechens, Muslims or refugees, and one third of the respondents would avoid neighbourhoods where Pakistanis, Hindus, Buddhists, dark-skinned people or Chinese people lived. The State party should therefore strengthen its public information and awareness-raising campaigns in order to rid people of such prejudices.

71. **Mr. Amir** commended the State party for its efforts to implement the Committee’s previous concluding observations and urged it to continue that policy. Unfortunately, the economic crisis had disrupted many of the initiatives it had taken. He asked whether the large budget cuts the State party had made in the area of social policy had resulted from a decision to focus on economic growth and development. He also wished to know whether the Government planned to reconsider its policies in order to combat discrimination on grounds of colour.

72. **Mr. Thornberry** drew the State party's attention to the fact that article 3 of the Convention prohibited segregation whether it was State policy or the result of private actions. Indeed, paragraph 3 of the Committee's general recommendation No. 19 recalled that partial segregation could arise as an unintended by-product of the actions of private individuals. Given the need to respect freedom of movement, it was not always easy to prevent such segregation. It was, however, somewhat disproportionate to consider segregation a crime against humanity. He asked how article 170, paragraph 1, of the Criminal Code was applied when contempt, hatred or incitement to discrimination was expressed, not necessarily publicly, but in the presence of the victim.

73. He welcomed the efforts the State party had made to integrate the Roma community. While progress had been made in the field of education for Roma children, he noted that many of them studied in special schools. Those schools performed an extremely valuable social function, providing for children with special needs, but it was important that children were not assigned to such schools on the basis of ethnic stereotypes associated with low ability. In order to ensure that the psychological testing for entry to such schools was not biased, he would appreciate additional information on how the tests were conducted. Details on the decision-making procedures and the involvement of parents would be useful. He wished to know what measures were taken to encourage the Roma community to send their children to school, apart from threatening them with administrative sanctions.

74. **Ms. Liauškienė** (Lithuania) said that comprehensive updated statistics would be available in the areas the Committee had mentioned by the end of 2011, as a national census was already under way. The overall population was decreasing, with the most recent data putting it at 3.3 million. In general, that was because more people were dying than were being born and the number of emigrants exceeded the number of immigrants. Nonetheless, the proportion of national minorities and ethnic groups had remained more or less stable, with the exception of Russians, a fact mainly due to the departure of the last Russian soldiers and their entourage in 1993.

75. The smallest ethnic groups, the Tartars and the Karaites, were well integrated in Lithuanian society. Of the country's 60 ambassadors, 3 were of Karaite origin and several key Government positions were currently held by persons of Tartar origin. That they had managed to maintain their language, religion and culture for the 600 years they had been living in Lithuania was an extremely positive fact. While the Tartars constituted the largest Muslim group in the country, they did not experience any discrimination on grounds of religion; on the contrary, they were well respected by the general population. Unfortunately, the same could not be said of the Roma, who continued to suffer discrimination in the areas of housing and education. The Government was aware of that problem and would welcome the Committee's advice on how to tackle it.

76. **Ms. Grigolovičienė** (Lithuania) said that the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman had been established in 1999 in the wake of the adoption of the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act in 1998. With the adoption of the Equal Treatment Act in 2005, the mandate of the Office had been extended to cover discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, sexual orientation, race, ethnic origin, religion or belief. In 2008, an amendment to that Act had further extended the scope of the Office, which now also included discrimination on the grounds of nationality, language, social status or attitude.

77. Both laws covered equal treatment in legal acts, employment, civil service, training and education, goods and services provision, membership and involvement in associations, and the social security system. They banned discriminatory advertisements for job vacancies and provided for affirmative action to accelerate genuine equality. Under those laws, all legislation had to take account of equal rights and treatment. Employers were required to apply equal recruitment criteria and employment conditions in the private and public sectors. All educational, scientific and academic establishments had to ensure that

equal criteria were applied to all entrants in the admissions process, in allocating loans and grants, and in establishing curricula and selecting educational resources. Likewise, salespersons, manufacturers and service providers had to create equal opportunities for all customers to obtain the same products, goods and services, including the provision of housing and equal payment terms. In advertisements for jobs and announcements of vacancies in the civil service and education, no mention of preferential conditions for persons of a certain age, sexual orientation, health status, race, ethnic origin, religion or belief was allowed.

78. The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman was appointed by the Seimas for a renewable term of five years. The Ombudsman's Office was staffed by six legal advisers and five specialists, and was financed from the State budget. Its functions included investigating complaints of discrimination. The Ombudsman could refer case files to investigative bodies if there were indications that an offence had been committed, make recommendations to the relevant person or institution in order to put a stop to unequal treatment, or dismiss the complaint. Another function was to submit recommendations on legislative amendments to the Government. The Office also conducted independent evaluations of situations involving discrimination, prepared independent reports, and networked with public institutions and organizations that assisted in implementing equality and non-discrimination. In addition, the Office was responsible for several projects in the field of public information and awareness-raising, usually through special events, seminars, training, publications, surveys, media broadcasts and festivals. The target groups were civil servants, State institutions, local authorities, NGOs, journalists, publishers, teachers, refugees and rural communities.

79. While the budget of the Ombudsman's Office had been set to increase significantly in 2008 in line with its extended mandate, the increase had not materialized owing to the cuts necessitated by the economic crisis. With the aim of rationalizing resources, the Seimas had suggested merging the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman with the Offices of the Children's Rights Ombudsman and the Seimas Ombudsman in 2009 and again in 2010. The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman had argued against that move.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.