Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Sixty-fifth session
Summary record of the 17th meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 28 February 2019, at 10 a.m.
Chair: Mr. Zerbini Ribeiro Leão

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Second periodic report of Kazakhstan (continued)
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Consideration of reports (continued)

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (continued)

Second periodic report of Kazakhstan (continued) (E/C.12/KAZ/2; E/C.12/KAZ/Q/2 and E/C.12/KAZ/Q/2/Add.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Kazakhstan took places at the Committee table.

2. Ms. Ravenberg (Country Task Force) said that she would like to know if legislation in Kazakhstan ensured that everyone had access to an efficient and free birth registration process, including for children born to undocumented parents. She asked if the procedures governing consent in the health system had ever been reviewed to ensure that persons who had been declared “incapable” could not be hospitalized or given medical treatment without their free and informed consent. Noting that medical experimentation was not allowed on persons declared “incapable” except in the case of clinical research on psychiatric disorders, she wished to know whether the Government had considered repealing that exception. She would appreciate an explanation of the procedure for the establishment of guardianship for such persons.

3. To combat discrimination based on HIV status and against persons with tuberculosis, she wished to know if the Government had reviewed all its anti-discrimination legislation to harmonize the provisions and ensure that the guarantees were enforceable. It would also be useful to know if the Government had reviewed the Code of Administrative Offences, the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure to assess their compatibility with the right to non-discrimination. She would welcome information on any steps the Government was taking to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and health status by medical personnel. She wished to know whether all women, including migrant women in the seasonal work system, had free access to prenatal and postnatal care and what measures were taken to ensure that all women had free access to sexual and reproductive health care, irrespective of their legal status.

4. Mr. Sadi said that he would be interested to know how the Covenant had been taken into account in the Government’s policy decisions and how often it was cited in Parliament. It would be useful to have specific examples of cases where the Covenant had prevailed over national law. He wanted to know what difficulties the State party had encountered in meeting its obligations under the Covenant. He asked what factors contributed to the major drug problem in Kazakhstan and what prevented the Government from addressing it.

5. Mr. Uprimny (Country Task Force) said that he would like clarification on the mechanism which would be used to increase spending on health, education and other social services. He would also like to know why some civil society organizations, such as Feminita, had not been allowed to register and what restrictions that placed on their work. He noted that, despite the Committee’s previous recommendation that Kazakhstan should strengthen opioid substitution programmes for drug users, very few persons had access to such programmes, and the criminalization of drug use also deterred users from accessing such services. He would like to know whether the Government intended to adopt a public health approach to problems associated with drug use, decriminalize drug use and increase the use of opioid substitution therapies and other harm reduction strategies.

6. Mr. Windfuhr (Country Task Force) said that he would like to know how the Government intended to resolve problems with trade union registration and would welcome specific information on any ongoing cases. He would like to hear the delegation’s position on the police response to the protests in Zhanaozen. He would be interested to learn how the Government intended to address the labour rights of migrants who were not legally recognized in the country. The delegation had said that the aim of the list of 191 jobs from which women were excluded was to protect pregnant women; however, that could be achieved through other forms of legislation. Finally, he would like to know how, in its exchanges with China, the Government addressed the problem of Kazakh citizens or their
relatives who were Chinese nationals who had been sent to re-education camps and had their Chinese passports withdrawn and how many such cases there were.

7. **Ms. Shin** said that she considered it unacceptable to exclude women from a large number of jobs under the pretext of protecting their reproductive function. The State party should instead eliminate harmful conditions and provide additional protection if necessary. A better measure to protect maternity would be to extend prenatal and postnatal care to migrant women workers. She would like to know if women in Kazakhstan had the autonomy to make decisions about family planning, including number of children and pregnancy spacing. She was interested in the prevalence of use of contraception by men and whether men shared responsibility for child-rearing. She would also like to know what progress was being made to eliminate gender role stereotypes.

8. **Mr. Kedzia** (Country Rapporteur) said that he wished to know why the constitutional provision regarding the direct applicability of international conventions had been dropped and what the impact had been. He would appreciate an explanation from the delegation regarding ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Covenant, as it had stated that financial implications were the main impediment, despite the fact that there were no reporting obligations. He would like to know what specific measures had been taken to prevent discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation and would appreciate comments on the Government’s response that there was no specific law providing for the protection of the relevant groups. Regarding the amendment of legislation on domestic violence, he was concerned by the distinction made between “light manifestations” and more serious violations, as domestic violence often began with minor incidents but then escalated. He would like to know whether companies had a legal duty to apply human rights due diligence across their operations and, if not, whether the Government intended to introduce legislation to that effect. He wished to know if the Government intended to develop a plan of action on business and human rights. It would be useful to have more information about the human rights impact assessment carried out before investment and trade agreements were signed and about evaluation of the environmental impact of investments prior to their approval.

9. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim** said that he hoped that the Government would continue to protect official pension funds from market fluctuations after any changes to the system. He would like an explanation of the evolution of the consumer price index. He welcomed the positive assessment of nuclear safety in the country by the International Atomic Energy Agency and was sure that the Government would continue to attach great importance to the issue.

10. **Mr. Emuze** said that, despite the guarantee of the right to strike in Kazakhstan’s Constitution and Labour Code, there was a restriction on strike action for railway transport and civil aviation workers, medical workers and service providers. Given that international law and International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments qualified the imposition of criminal sanctions on those who participated in peaceful strikes as excessive, he would like to hear the Government’s position on the conclusions adopted in 2015, 2016 and 2017 by the ILO Conference Committee on the Application of Standards.

11. **Ms. Kassymova** (Kazakhstan) said that, although corporal punishment had been abolished in schools, some cases had been reported of parents treating their children cruelly. Children’s rights to life, personal freedom and physical integrity were protected under the Constitution and the Rights of the Child Act. Article 40 of the Criminal Code set forth the types of punishments that might be applied to parents and employees of educational establishments who were responsible for cruel treatment, including fines of 120 times the monthly calculation index, community service or 30 days’ imprisonment. An inter-agency forum had been held at which representatives of State bodies, civil society and parents’ associations, mindful that the cruel treatment of children was not confined to the family, had agreed on a number of measures to combat the problem. Psychologists and education professionals had reviewed the legal framework for addressing cruelty against children, and a plan had been developed to upgrade the skills of persons employed by educational establishments and to identify and provide social assistance to children at risk. A telephone helpline had been launched to provide psychological assistance for children and adolescents in difficult life situations.
12. Mr. Samet (Kazakhstan) said that the Office of the Procurator General was aware of its responsibility to deal with domestic violence, particularly that inflicted on children. In 2017, the Office had launched the “Kazakhstan Free from Domestic Violence” project, whose goals included prevention, the provision of legal advice and psychological help for victims and families, and the establishment of a centre to work with aggressors. As a result of a significant effort deployed in the regions, there had been an 85 per cent surge in the number of complaints submitted by victims of domestic violence. Other measures implemented under the project included the establishment of a department for family affairs and the participation of newlywed couples in educational sessions to prepare them for family life.

13. Ms. Sadvokassova (Kazakhstan) said that persons with disabilities enjoyed the personal and economic rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution, and discrimination against them was prohibited under article 5 of the Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act. Persons with disabilities received social allowances funded from the State budget and might also receive benefits, if eligible, from the State social insurance fund. In 2010, an allowance had been introduced for the carers of children and adolescents with disabilities. Monitoring of compliance with the Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities Act and legislation on the provision of special social services was carried out at the local level by inspection units, who had the power under the Entrepreneurial Offences and the Code of Administrative Offences to issue orders and impose administrative fines in the event of a violation. The amount of fines varied according to whether the offender was a civil servant, a small enterprise, a medium-sized enterprise or a large enterprise, with repeat offenders incurring larger fines. In 2018, more than 600 inspections had been carried out and 100 firms had been fined. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection was now working to develop a new national plan of action to ensure the rights and improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities for the period 2019–2025. Priority areas for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities included preventing the occurrence of disability, perfecting the system of inclusive education, establishing a barrier-free environment by 2030, ensuring quality of employment, enhancing economic autonomy, and training and awareness-raising among citizens to improve attitudes towards persons with disabilities.

14. Mr. Kachakov (Kazakhstan) said that the Government’s housing policy was designed to provide accessible housing for all sectors of society. In 2018, the rate of housing construction in Kazakhstan – with the addition of more than 12 million m$^2$ of housing – had surpassed that of all the other countries of the former Soviet Union. A further 13 million m$^2$ would be added in 2019, providing accommodation for about 118,000 families. Eighty-seven per cent of new construction was built by the private sector, and the Government had earmarked $270 million each year to help make sure that all such housing had access to water, sewerage, electricity and telephone services. It also provided affordable housing for vulnerable social groups and had budgeted $93 million for the annual construction of around 4,000 rental housing units, made available at minimum rents. Vulnerable groups also qualified for State mortgages for housing purchase at a 2 per cent interest rate, with very affordable repayments. The State budget would include $135 million for housing each year, to assist an additional 25,000 citizens. About 6,000 apartments were built each year for families with large numbers of children under a plan to house 40,000 such families over the following seven years. About 20 per cent of all State housing was set aside for special categories of vulnerable persons, including orphans. The Government also funded a housing programme for working youth, which provided 1,000 apartments annually for persons wishing to migrate to a more economically prosperous part of the country. Lastly, it had launched the 7-20-25 mortgage programme, which was helping over 185,000 persons to purchase their accommodation. While housing problems could not be resolved overnight, the Government recognized the demand for housing and was taking steps to ensure access for all.

15. Ms. Erzhigitova (Kazakhstan) said that the Government had adopted special legislation on birth registration in 2015. A database was maintained to make sure that births were registered correctly and efforts were being made to introduce best practices from other countries. Foreign nationals and stateless persons were issued identity papers if they submitted certified Kazakh or Russian translations of their documents. Since independence, Kazakhstan had seen increases in the number of registered marriages and births, with the number of births registered each year rising from about 278,000 in 2005 to about 420,000 in
recent years. That increase reflected both the improving demographic situation and the proactive steps taken by the Government, including under the “Digital Kazakhstan” programme, to provide assistance for birth registration. Hospitals and clinics were now able to input information into an online system, while people living in rural areas and families on low incomes were able to apply for a birth certificate using a special mobile telephone service.

16. Ms. Akhmetova (Kazakhstan) said that the Government had been working to modernize health services and enhance accessibility. In view of the low number of physicians per capita, steps had been taken to ease the pressure on medical practitioners and to increase their salaries. The Government encouraged doctors to move to rural areas, and paid for the housing of those that did so, in order to improve the availability of medical services in those areas. There had also been an increase in the uptake of private medical services. In respect of consent for medical treatment, children under the age of 18 years could only undergo procedures with the agreement of their parents.

17. Under existing legislation, the rights of persons living with HIV and tuberculosis were upheld and they were not discriminated against, while a national plan had been put in place to eradicate stigma and discrimination against certain population groups in hospitals. The Government had established facilities that provided confidential practical and psychological assistance for patients, it worked with civil society organizations active in the sphere, and it had developed an HIV prevention programme that sought to raise awareness among young people. Tuberculosis patients in Kazakhstan did not have to pay for medical treatment, which was covered by the State. Any individual who did not agree with his or her diagnosis was free to lodge a complaint with the relevant authorities or with the courts. Women migrants, other than ethnic Kazakh returnees (oralman), were required to pay for antenatal and postnatal care, while medical services during childbirth were free for everyone in the country.

18. Youth medical centres staffed with the relevant specialists provided confidential treatment and advice on reproductive health, as well as access to contraceptives, for young people up to the age of 25 years. Patients did not have to register with the centre or even reside in the area. Family planning offices also provided contraceptives and free consultations. The Government planned to increase education and health-care expenditure by 25 per cent.

19. Mr. Baibolov (Kazakhstan) said that foreigners could register on a temporary basis with the authorities in their place of temporary or permanent residence; the procedure could be completed at migration service centres found in the main cities and most regions. It was also possible to register online. Stateless persons in Kazakhstan enjoyed rights and freedoms under the Constitution, and could apply for citizenship.

20. Ms. Unzhakova (Kazakhstan) said that national legislation had been brought into line with the international instruments that the country had ratified. Laws and regulations were drafted by members of Parliament, taking into account the recommendations of bodies such as the Committee and the views of business and civil society. A legislative office checked bills and amendments to ensure that they were not in breach of the country’s international commitments, including the Covenant. Regarding nuclear safety, a bill that was due to come before Parliament would oblige the operators of the country’s five nuclear facilities to obtain insurance, so as to be able to pay compensation to victims in the unlikely event of a disaster.

21. Mr. Abishev (Kazakhstan), recalling that the Covenant, which Kazakhstan had ratified in 2005, prevailed over domestic laws, said that all international instruments ratified by the Government were examined by the relevant commission to ensure their compatibility with the Constitution. The constitutional amendment adopted in 2017 did nothing to diminish the legal force of the Covenant or of any other international human rights instrument ratified by Kazakhstan, all of which continued to be directly applicable in the country. The Government had no objections to ratifying the Optional Protocol, although it noted that about 140 United Nations Member States had neither signed nor ratified it. An interdepartmental commission would soon consider and decide whether to proceed with ratification, irrespective of the decisions taken by other States.

22. With respect to the registration of civil society organizations, if the organizational aims of Feminita were brought into line with national legislation, it could be duly registered.
23. Ms. Akhmetova (Kazakhstan) said that persons who were diagnosed as suffering from alcohol or drug dependence were provided with treatment and medical assistance by the appropriate bodies. Kazakhstan had approved a protocol on the use of opioid substitution therapy and, under the related programme, 13 centres providing such therapy had been established in nine regions. As of 2018, roughly 1,100 patients had received treatment in the 10 years the programme had been running: many of them had been dependent on heroin or long-term drugs users; over 60 per cent had hepatitis B or C, 28 per cent had HIV and 17 per cent had tuberculosis; and three quarters had a criminal conviction, of whom one third had more than three convictions.

24. Mr. Baibolov (Kazakhstan) said that the provision of opioid substitution therapy was overseen by State bodies with the aim of combating drug addiction and drug trafficking. An inter-agency commission had been established to review the pilot programme and would take a decision on the use of opioid substitution therapy in the near future. Some participants had been removed from the programme because they had committed drugs-related and other offences.

25. Mr. Sarbassov (Kazakhstan) said that the list of jobs accessible to women could be expanded, as long as the jobs were not considered dangerous for women. With regard to trade unions, individuals could not be prosecuted for belonging to a trade union, but some individuals who were trade union leaders had been prosecuted for violating the law. Following the visit of the ILO high-level mission to Kazakhstan, a roadmap had been established to abolish the two-stage registration procedure for trade unions. The roadmap had been the subject of consultations with the social partners and was now before the Ministry of Labour, awaiting approval. Labour rights, including the right to strike, were duly respected in Kazakhstan. There was a restriction on strike action for railway transport and civil aviation workers, medical workers and service providers, with a view to the maintenance of a minimum service, but there appeared to be a consensus on the need for a minimum service and the lines of work affected.

26. Ethnic Kazakhs living in other countries had the right to return to Kazakhstan: more than 1 million had already done so. Problems arose only when Chinese nationals who were legally present in Kazakhstan applied for Kazakh citizenship, as that was not permitted under Chinese legislation. The Government was working with Kazakh citizens to avoid problems in the future and was engaged in negotiations with China to resolve the issue.

27. Mr. Samet (Kazakhstan) said that, over the previous five years, enjoyment of the right to peaceful assembly had resulted in some 560 gatherings, most of which had been held spontaneously, without following the procedures laid down by law. Strikes could be declared illegal only by the courts, after a very complex process. To date, only one person had been judged under the relevant article of the Constitution.

28. Mr. Abishev (Kazakhstan) said that private and public businesses both had social responsibilities vis-à-vis their workers and were obliged to observe their labour and economic rights. The Government had developed a national plan of action on human rights in the 1990s and, more recently, had begun developing a plan of action on business and human rights, in consultation with civil society, non-governmental organizations, the Legal Policy Research Centre and the British Embassy in Astana. The plan of action would be in line with the guiding principles of the United Nations and would be of a recommendatory nature.

29. Mr. Baibolov (Kazakhstan) said that, since the adoption of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act in 2009, 12 amendments had been introduced to improve protection for victims. Thirty-one crisis centres had been established in Kazakhstan, 23 of which offered shelters, and provided social, psychological and medical assistance to victims.

30. Ms. Murzabekova (Kazakhstan) said that chapter 6 of the Environmental Code stated that any type of business or other activity that may have a direct or indirect impact on the environment and human health must undergo an environment impact assessment. A new draft of the Environmental Code was being developed, with a view to promoting sustainable development and protecting the environment for future generations. The draft Code envisaged moving towards a green economy and introduced new regulatory and monitoring tools and mechanisms, as well as a new instrument for economic cooperation and development based on the “polluter pays” principle. It also introduced an environmental
assessment instrument that would determine the impact of a business or activity on the environment at an earlier stage.

31. **Ms. Unzhakova** (Kazakhstan) said that Kazakhstan had adopted the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Opportunities and Equal Rights for Men and Women; both parents were responsible for the education of children under article 30 of the Code on Marriage and Family; and article 6 of the Labour Code prohibited gender-based discrimination in the workplace. The Government had prepared a draft law that contained new criteria concerning harassment in the workplace and gender-based discrimination, which it hoped would be adopted in the near future. Its most important achievement to date had been raising public awareness of what constituted harassment and gender-based discrimination.

32. **Mr. Uprimny**, while acknowledging the progress that had been made in terms of universal access to education, said that he wished to know when the anticipated 25 per cent increase in spending on health and education would take place and whether the increase was in constant or nominal terms. He also wished to know what steps the Government was taking to improve access to early education, to ensure that access to tertiary education was based on merit alone, to reduce regional and income disparities in access to education and to improve the overall quality of education. He would like to hear about action taken to ensure that children of undocumented migrants were able to attend school and enjoy access to books and hot meals, to ensure that children with disabilities had access to inclusive and quality education, to combat violence and bullying in schools, particularly against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children, and to ensure that students who spoke ethnic minority languages were able to receive instruction in their own language. Lastly, he would be interested to find out what the Government was doing to guarantee transparency in the allocation of funding for scientific research and to combat corruption in that regard, and had it adopted any strategies or policies to help young people become scientists or take part in cultural life.

33. **Ms. Kassynova** (Kazakhstan) said that, in 2019, the budget for education and health was roughly 10 per cent of gross domestic product. The majority of the country’s more than 7,000 State schools were located in rural areas and almost all had access to the Internet, and thus to educational resources. There were currently 2,500 small rural schools in Kazakhstan, which offered high quality education and access to educational materials. A pilot project had been launched, whereby families hosted children from remote areas to allow them to attend school. The families were paid a monthly sum by the State, based on the number of children hosted. Multimedia equipment was being provided to many educational institutions as part of efforts to narrow the gap between urban and rural schools, and around 5,000 schools were due to receive new equipment.

34. Inclusiveness in education had become State policy, with the aim of guaranteeing access to inclusive education and the social assistance and support necessary in that environment for all children with a disability or special need. Individual institutions’ suitability for inclusive education programmes was determined by a commission of specialist teachers and doctors, and over 800 preschools and around 3,500 secondary schools, plus many technical and vocational training institutions, currently offered such programmes. Following the launch of a special funding scheme in 2018, grants were available to encourage schools to accommodate children with special needs. The scheme was already fully operational in Astana, Almaty and Shymkent, and was being piloted in a number of the regions. Educational institutions were given a per capita grant for every child with a disability or special need enrolled in their inclusive programmes. Children with a disability or special need could be enrolled in any school of their choice, irrespective of their place of residence, in contrast to the general rule, and would receive a school leavers’ certificate stating that they had received a full, inclusive education rather than a limited education only, as had been the case in the past. Curricula adjustments to accommodate a child’s particular needs and make the curriculum more accessible remained permissible nonetheless.

35. Kazakh was the main language of instruction in State schools but many schools used Russian as the main medium and a smaller number used a mix of Kazakh and Russian or Kazakh and Uyghur. Depending on the region, instruction in Uzbek or Tajik might also be available. All children were entitled to enrol in the school closest to their home, irrespective of their status: it was no longer necessary to provide proof of residency or registration.
present. State schools were educating around 12,000 migrant children from neighbouring countries and further afield, including over 1,800 ethnic Kazakh returnee children.

36. **Mr. Mukushev** (Kazakhstan) said that 2019 had been designated the Year of Youth in Kazakhstan and a comprehensive programme of events and activities had been approved by Parliament. The programme addressed youth issues from all angles and encompassed education, upbringing and social development, among other areas.

37. **Ms. Unzhakova** (Kazakhstan) said that, because children were entitled by law to receive instruction in their mother tongue, special schools had been set up in cultural centres to cater for their needs. National legislation also provided that children from low-income families should be given free school meals, free clothing and free educational materials. Overcrowding was a problem in some schools in the south of the country, where transport links were better, while some schools in the north had pupil to teacher ratios of less than 3 to 1. To address that imbalance, the authorities had launched a redistribution programme under which families living in the south were offered State support and easy access to housing and education as incentives to move to the north. The academic independence of higher education institutions was regulated in a specific law designed to reduce corruption in access to educational grants and qualifications.

38. **Mr. Abishev** (Kazakhstan) said that vocational secondary education had been available in Kazakhstan free of charge to citizens, non-citizens and stateless persons, without distinction, since 2017. The authorities were working hard to address problems in the educational system and a special inspectorate had been created to that end, as well as a special commission to address problems specifically affecting teenagers. Representatives of civil society assisted local governments and municipalities in organizing seminars and training sessions on the rights of the child. The right to engage in scientific research activity was guaranteed by law and there was no discrimination in that area.

39. **Ms. Janenova** (Kazakhstan) said that addressing corruption at all levels of education was a priority, and a culture that rejected corruption was encouraged among schoolchildren from the youngest age. The Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption Activities was working to improve transparency in universities, colleges and scientific institutions in general, notably through the creation of monitoring councils, which included civil society representatives, in individual establishments. The councils had been involved in the open elections for rectors of 28 institutions, with candidates from academia, business and government agencies, to ensure the appointment of well qualified and highly trustworthy individuals. In addition, institutions were now expected to report on their expenditure as well as on academic aspects of their work so as to ensure public accountability.

40. The Agency worked closely with students and teachers to detect and raise awareness of corruption-related issues, having set up front offices in individual institutions to facilitate liaison. Surveys and spot checks were conducted to assess potentially problematic situations and identity appropriate responses, and an academic honesty league table had been created, with individual institutions ranked according to teaching quality and independence, among other attributes. Since the risk of corruption was higher when education was provided remotely, special focal points had been appointed in institutions offering distance learning modules. To further increase transparency, grants to cover the cost of higher education were released only after approval by the Agency, information about awards was published on websites, and competitions were being used more frequently to select recipients. In 2018, the Agency had analysed the specific risks of corruption in funding for scientific research and had issued recommendations based on the findings. Thus, the Government was taking all possible action to eliminate corruption.

41. **Ms. Unzhakova** (Kazakhstan) said that a teacher certification scheme had been launched to improve the quality of education and the Ministry of Education was currently working on a bill to make teaching more competitive as a profession by offering the possibility of higher wages for better quality teaching. The ultimate goal was to attract better staff.

42. **Mr. Mukushev** (Kazakhstan) said that, in 2014, the Ministry of Culture and Sports had formulated a concept paper that had examined public access to culture, including opportunities for visiting cultural places and engaging in cultural activity, and the possibility...
of free access for low-income families, children, persons with disabilities and students. Persons with disabilities currently enjoyed either free or half-price entrance to theatres, museums and other cultural establishments.

43. **Mr. Suyunov** (Kazakhstan) said that, as part of the 2013 reform of the pension system, 10 private pension funds had been combined into a single contributory fund. That fund was now owned by the State and managed by the National Bank in conjunction with the Council for the Management of Pension Assets within the President’s Office. The fund was invested in various vehicles, in accordance with the aims of the unified pension fund and market conditions, and income was distributed among pension holders on the basis of their contributions.

44. **Ms. Sadvokassova** (Kazakhstan) said that the methodology used to construct the consumer price index for Kazakhstan was in line with the International Labour Organization Manual on Consumer Price Indices and the guidelines of other international bodies. The index was updated each month based on the price of a basket of 58 goods and services.

45. **Mr. Abashidze,** acknowledging the State party’s considerable investments and achievements in education, said that it was clearly heading in the right policy direction. The availability of grants to study abroad and the attention given to learning languages other than Kazakh were particularly commendable, in his view. With language issues in mind, he would like to know how the State party envisaged making the switch to the Latin alphabet that was currently under consideration and whether it had conducted a comprehensive assessment of the educational and cultural challenges that were likely to be involved.

46. **Mr. Uprimny** said that he had not had a response to his questions on bullying in schools and the protection available for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in school.

47. **Mr. Abishev** (Kazakhstan) said that a phased introduction of the Latin alphabet was envisaged, beginning in 2025. Only Kazakh schools would make the switch. Russian schools would continue to use the Cyrillic alphabet, there would be no discrimination against persons who studied in Russian, and the two alphabets would be used in parallel with neither one detracting from the other. The Government did not want to infringe upon anyone’s rights but considered the change advisable since most of the world used Latin script. Funding for training and information materials would be made available from the State budget and awareness-raising campaigns would be organized in rural areas and at the regional level.

48. **Mr. Baibolov** (Kazakhstan) said that he wished to reassure the experts that there was no ingrained bullying or harassment in Kazakh schools, although there could be occasional cases of petty hooliganism. A juvenile police system had been developed and each school had a school inspector who worked with the authorities, teachers, parents and pupils to address any behavioural issues that might arise.

49. **Ms. Akhmetova** (Kazakhstan) said that each school also had a psychologist who observed pupils with a view to identifying any problems. Whenever problems were identified, the psychologist consulted with the parents before taking action.

50. **Mr. Abishev** (Kazakhstan) said that the Human Rights Commission worked at local level with law enforcement bodies and various ministry agencies to ensure that bullying or harassment directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender children was immediately stamped out and that all children, irrespective of their status or social situation, were protected against discrimination. A very strong stance was taken on cases of abuse, which were in any case very rare.

51. **Mr. Kedzia,** thanking the delegation for the highly constructive and professional dialogue, said that the Committee appreciated its efforts to provide comprehensive answers. It had also appreciated the very valuable input provided by civil society. The Committee had thus gained a solid base of information to guide its concluding observations and he hoped that the Government of Kazakhstan would establish participatory mechanisms for follow-up action.
52. **Mr. Mukushev** (Kazakhstan) said that he would like to thank all members of the Committee for the very constructive dialogue and assure them that the Government would continue its endeavours to improve the well-being of the people of Kazakhstan in all areas.

53. **Ms. Aitzhanova** (Kazakhstan), thanking Committee members for the genuine interest they had shown in her country, said that providing a comprehensive description of policies and efforts to implement them in just six hours was not an easy task. For that reason, she would like to invite the experts to visit Kazakhstan to see its schools and hospitals and meet with government and civil society representatives in person. She looked forward to continuing the dialogue.

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*