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**Human Rights Committee****Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of  
North Macedonia\***

1. The Committee considered the 4th periodic report of North Macedonia<sup>1</sup> at its 4234 and 4235 meetings,<sup>2</sup> held on 30 of June and 1 July 2025. At its 4254<sup>th</sup> meeting, held on 14 July, it adopted the present concluding observations.

**A. Introduction**

2. The Committee is grateful to the State Party for having accepted the simplified reporting procedure and for submitting its fourth periodic report in response to the list of issues prior to reporting prepared under that procedure.<sup>3</sup> It expresses appreciation for the opportunity to renew its constructive dialogue with the State Party's delegation on the measures taken during the reporting period to implement the provisions of the Covenant. The Committee thanks the State Party for the oral responses provided by the delegation and for the supplementary information provided to it in writing.

**B. Positive aspects**

3. The Committee welcomes the following legislative and policy measures taken by the State Party:

- (a) The adoption of the Law on Free Legal Aid in 2019;
- (b) The adoption of the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination in 2020;
- (c) The adoption of the Law on the Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in 2021;
- (d) The adoption of amendments to the Law on Citizenship, in 2021, and other legislation aimed at ending statelessness and putting safeguards in place to prevent future cases of statelessness;
- (e) The adoption of the Law on Payment of Monetary Compensation to Victims of Violent Crimes in 2022;
- (f) The adoption of the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma 2022-2030;

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\* Adopted by the Committee at its 144th session (23 June – 17 July 2025).

<sup>1</sup> [CCPR/C/MKD/4](#).

<sup>2</sup> See [CCPR/C/SR.4234](#) and [CCPR/C/SR.4235](#).

<sup>3</sup> [CCPR/C/MKD/QPR/4](#).

(g) The preparation of the draft National Strategy for Prevention and Protection from Gender-Based Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2026-2033);

(f) The publication of the Manual for Submitting an Individual Complaint to the UN Human Rights Committee in 2022.

4. The Committee also welcomes the accession by the State Party to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

## C. Principal matters of concern and recommendations

### Implementation of the Covenant and its Optional Protocol

5. Recalling its previous concluding observations,<sup>4</sup> the Committee remains concerned about the absence of judicial decisions invoking the Covenant in national courts during the reporting period. It also notes that the low number of complaints received under the Optional Protocol procedure may indicate a lack of awareness of the Covenant and its Optional Protocol, despite the initiatives taken by the Ministry of Justice and the Macedonian Association of Young Lawyers to facilitate the submission of complaints (art. 2).

**6. The State Party should take all steps necessary to increase awareness of the provisions of the Covenant and ensure its application in national courts, including through regular training for judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law enforcement officials. It should also continue raising awareness of the complaints procedure under the Optional Protocol and establish mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of the Committee's future Views so as to guarantee the right to an effective remedy, as established in article 2 (3) of the Covenant.**

### National human rights institution

7. The Committee regrets that the Ombudsman's Office is still not fully compliant with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) as it was accredited as a B status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions in 2011 and there has been no application for re-accreditation since. Furthermore, whilst it welcomes the designation of the Ombudsman as the independent monitoring mechanism under article 33 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and as National Rapporteur on Trafficking, it regrets that such functions have not been adequately regulated in the legal framework. In particular, the Committee is also concerned by the challenges posed by the lack of appropriate funding that hinders the effective and full discharge of its mandate (art. 2).

**8. The State party should take all the measures necessary to ensure that the Ombudsman's Office fully complies with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and is able to carry out its mandate fully, effectively and independently. In particular, the State party should intensify its efforts to adopt a legal framework for all functions of the Ombudsman's Office and ensure that it has all the necessary resources for its functions.**

### Anti-corruption measures

9. The Committee notes the important measures taken to address corruption, including the work of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption as well as the plans to update the law on prevention of corruption and conflict of interests of 2019 and the law on whistleblowers. However, the Committee deplores the reported persistence of corruption,

<sup>4</sup> CCPR/C/MKD/CO/3, para. 6.

including in the judiciary and in the prisons administration, and the low number of criminal proceedings and of convictions (arts. 2 and 25).

**10. The State Party should:**

**(a) Redouble its efforts to investigate all allegations of corruption at all levels, including in the judiciary and the prison administration promptly, thoroughly, independently and impartially, ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence, and provide redress to victims of corruption;**

**(b) Strengthen the capacity of police, prosecutors and judges to identify and address corruption effectively, including through the provision of appropriate and regular training;**

**(c) Expedite the planned adoption of revised laws for the protection of whistle-blowers and the law on prevention of corruption and conflict of interest, ensuring that they are in full conformity with international standards;**

**(d) Implement awareness-raising campaigns to inform public officials, politicians, the business community and the general public about the economic and social costs of corruption and the mechanisms in place to report it.**

**Non-discrimination and hate speech**

11. The Committee once again welcomes the passing in 2020 of a new Law on Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination which has renewed and strengthened the Commission on Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination which can receive and review complaints of discrimination by public and private actors. However, it notes and regrets the underfunding of the Commission which is operating with only a fifth of its required human resources (arts. 2 and 26).

**12. The State party should take all the measures necessary to ensure that the Commission on Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination is able to carry out its mandate fully, effectively and independently and in particular that it has all the necessary resources for its functions.**

13. The Committee welcomes the inclusion of gender identity and sexual orientation within the grounds for aggravated criminal acts as hate crimes and the initiative to prepare a revision of its Criminal Code that would establish a stand-alone offence of hate speech. However, it is concerned about the lack of clarity in the legal definition of hate speech, which is scattered as an aggravated factor in eight different crimes, and about the low levels of convictions on this ground (arts. 2, 19, 20 and 26).

**14. The State party should strengthen its efforts to combat hate speech and hate crimes, in particular against persons of Roma ethnicity and Muslims, by, inter alia:**

**(a) Ensuring that the definition of hate speech and hate crimes in the new Criminal Code to be enacted, comply with international standards and that it takes into account all grounds under the Covenant, including sexual orientation and gender identity;**

**(b) Ensuring that alleged hate crimes are thoroughly investigated and suspected perpetrators prosecuted, and, if convicted, punished with sanctions commensurate with the seriousness of the offence and that victims have access to full reparation;**

**(c) Taking effective measures to prevent and publicly condemn hate speech, in particular by public officials;**

**(d) Increasing the provision of special training for law enforcement officials, prosecutors and judges on the identification and prosecution of hate speech and other forms of hate crimes;**

**(e) Conducting awareness-raising campaigns to promote respect for diversity and culture of respect, as well as about channels to report such crimes;**

**(f) Ensuring effective monitoring of hate speech and hate crime through the systematic collection of data on related complaints and their outcomes.**

15. The Committee is also concerned by the reported anti-gender movements countrywide and by the continued absence of legal recognition and protection of same-sex couples (arts. 2, 17 and 26)

16. **The State Party should:**

**(a) adopt or amend legislation with a view to ensuring the legal recognition of same-sex couples**

**(b) strengthen public awareness-raising campaigns in order to address social and cultural patterns and stereotypes that encourage and facilitate gender-inequalities.**

#### **Rights of the Roma**

17. The Committee welcomes the adoption of a Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma 2022-2030 and the progress achieved in addressing school segregation, increasing employment of Roma women and in the assignment of social housing. However, it reiterates its reproach that members of the Roma community continue to suffer from significant discrimination and marginalization, and from high rates of poverty and exclusion, as reflected in their lower education, employment, housing and health outcomes. The Committee remains annoyed by reports that State Party nationals of Roma ethnicity, whose size is uncertain even to the government, are still being arbitrarily denied the right to leave North Macedonia and by reports of ethnic profiling, particularly of Roma, at border-crossing controls. It is also convinced that there is lack of clarity regarding the population of Roma ethnicity living in North Macedonia, which hinders the production and analysis of segregated data and the attention and respect of the human rights of its members (arts. 2, 22, 26 and 27).

18. **The State party should strengthen the measures to address the discrimination and marginalization faced by the Roma community, including by:**

**(a) Taking all the measures necessary to ensure that no one is unduly arbitrarily deprived of their right to leave the State party's territory and that any allegation of ethnic profiling by border officials is promptly, thoroughly and independently investigated;**

**(b) Allocating sufficient resources to poverty reduction measures targeting the Roma community, and designing such measures so as to ensure that they effectively reach all Roma persons living in poverty;**

**(c) Strengthening and expanding the provision of education for Roma children, the teaching of Roma language and culture in schools and special measures to increase the participation of the Roma community in public and political life, including measures aimed at enhancing Roma employment within public administrations;**

**(d) Implementing awareness-raising campaigns in schools to address the discrimination faced by the Roma community;**

**(e) Improving the methodology of census procedures, ensuring the collection of fully disaggregated data on instances of discrimination and on the enjoyment and exercise of their rights by the Roma population, as well as on the determination of the Roma population.**

#### **Gender equality**

19. The Committee welcomes the steady progress in increasing the participation of women in Parliament and the existence of gender quotas. However, it is concerned about the underrepresentation of women in all decision-making positions, such as mayors or managerial positions. It is also concerned by the low representation of women from smaller ethnic minority groups in political and public life. The Committee is further concerned over the lack of progress since 2021 in advancing the legislative process for the adoption of a new Law on Gender Equality (arts. 3 and 26).

20. **The State party should continue introducing its measures to guarantee de jure and de facto equality between men and women. In particular it should:**

(a) **Strengthen its efforts to increase the representation of women in all spheres of society, including those positions not subjected to quotas and in relation to women from all ethnic minority groups;**

(b) **Speed up the efforts to adopt the Law on Gender Equality that complies with the provisions of the Covenant and other relevant international standards.**

#### **Violence against women, including domestic violence**

21. Recalling its previous concluding observations (para. 11), the Committee welcomes notable steps taken to strengthen the legislative and policies for combating violence against women, in particular, the amendments to the Criminal Code containing a definition of rape and sexual violence based on the absence of consent and the adoption of the Law on the Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and of the Law on Free Legal Aid defining victims of gender-based violence as a special category of beneficiaries. The Committee is nonetheless concerned about the reportedly high level of societal tolerance for and prevalence of gender-based violence and about reported gaps in implementation of the laws in place. In particular, the Committee is concerned that women involved in court proceedings are often unaware of their right to free legal aid, that temporary measures of protection are often inefficient to prevent further victimisation, and that minor mothers who are victims of gender-based violence cannot stay in shelters. The Committee is further concerned about the prevalence of femicide, in particular of Roma women, and the low number of convictions for this crime. It is also concerned about the lack of recognition of other forms of violence on the State Party, including psychological and online gender-based violence (arts. 2, 3, 6, 7 and 26).

22. **The State Party should continue its efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence and ensuring an effective implementation of the existing legislation. In particular the State Party should:**

(a) **Ensure that all cases of violence against women, including domestic violence, are thoroughly investigated, that the perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with commensurate penalties;**

(b) **Strengthen existing mechanisms in order to encourage women victims of violence to file complaints, including by ensuring that they are informed of their rights, and improve its system for collecting data on cases of all forms of gender-based violence in order to evaluate the scope of the phenomena and assess the efficiency of the measures adopted to combat them;**

(c) **Ensure that all victims have access to full reparations and effective means of protection, as well as access to assistance, including to free legal aid, shelters and psychosocial assistance, regardless of their age;**

(d) **Continue and expand the training of public officials, including judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law enforcement officers, on identifying and handling cases of violence against women, including femicide, domestic, sexual and online violence;**

(e) **Strengthen public awareness-raising campaigns in order to address social and cultural patterns and stereotypes that encourage and facilitate gender-based violence.**

#### **Voluntary termination of pregnancy and sexual and reproductive rights**

23. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Law on Termination of Pregnancy in 2019 which removed obstacles for the voluntary termination of pregnancy. However, the Committee is concerned about the limited availability of medical termination of pregnancy outside Skopje and about its impact on women and girls in rural areas and about the fact that the cost of contraception and abortion, except in cases of medical need, must be covered by the patient (arts. 6, 7 and 26).

24. **Bearing in mind paragraph 8 of the Committee's general comment No. 36 (2018) on the right to life, the State party should continue its efforts to guarantee safe, effective and affordable access to abortion for women and girls throughout North Macedonia.**

#### **Liberty and security of the person**

25. The Committee welcomes the increased use of alternatives to pretrial detention, but it is concerned by the excessive length of pretrial detention, which can extend up to a year for offences punished with 15 years of imprisonment and up to two years for offences punished with life imprisonment. It is also concerned that individuals may be detained for up to 180 days during the investigation phase of criminal proceedings (art. 9).

26. **Taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 35 (2014) on liberty and security of person, the State Party should ensure that pretrial detention is used only as an exceptional measure, for a limited period of time, based on an assessment of individual circumstances and judicially reviewed on a regular basis.**

#### **Cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and excessive use of force**

27. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the Civil Control Mechanism within the Office of the Ombudsman, which works with civil society organisations and has the capacity to carry out visits to places of detention, examine complaints of abuse of use of force by police officers, provide legal support and issue early warning notices. The Committee also welcomes the increasing use of the opportunity to file complaints before the Civil Control Mechanism, as well as the establishment of safeguards to allow the work of the public prosecutor in the investigation of excessive use of force by police officers, such as the abolition of the statute of limitation in cases of excessive use of force. However, the Committee is concerned that most of the complaints to the Civil Control Mechanism have been dismissed being considered unfounded; that the State party does not have a registry of injuries in places of detention; and that there is no disaggregated data of complaints of excessive use of force according to the ethnic origin of the alleged victim (art. 6, 7 and 10).

28. **The State Party should:**

(a) **Conduct thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all allegations of ill-treatment in custody, in accordance with the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), and all allegations of excessive use of force by law enforcement officers;**

(b) **Ensure that all complaints submitted to the Civil Control Mechanism of the Ombudsman is carefully investigated and all cases where the allegations may be founded are referred to the prosecutor for criminal charges the Civil Control Mechanism within the Office of the Ombudsman;**

(c) **Reinforce its oversight mechanisms to prevent and address cases of excessive use of force by law enforcement officers, ensure the prompt establishment of a registry of injuries in places of detention and record disaggregated data on complaints of excessive use of force or ill-treatment, including by ethnic origin.**

#### **Treatment of persons deprived of their liberty**

29. The Committee is concerned by reports of severe overcrowding, understaffing and obsolete infrastructures of prisons, as well as corruption of prison staff for paid privileges or contraband, particularly in Idrizovo Prison. It notes the State party's efforts to address overcrowding in prisons through increased use of alternatives to imprisonment such as probation and electronic monitoring such as ankle bracelets, but it is concerned that such measures may be insufficient given the magnitude of the problem. The Committee is also concerned by reports of lack of adequate access to food, drinking water, basic health care and education support services in places of detention, including in those for juveniles (art. 10)

30. **The State Party should continue its efforts to improve the conditions of detention and ensure that they are in full compliance with the United Nations Standard Minimum**

**Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson-Mandela Rules) and other relevant international standards. It should, in particular:**

**(a) Enhance the measures designed to end and prevent overcrowding, particularly by the wider application of alternatives to pretrial detention and non-custodial prison sentences, as provided for in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules);**

**(b) Intensify its efforts to improve the conditions of detention and ensure adequate access to food, drinking water, basic health care and education support services, including in places of detention for juveniles, including through the renovation of existing facilities.**

#### **Elimination of slavery, servitude and trafficking in persons**

31. The Committee welcomes the incorporation of the non-punishment principle for victims of human trafficking for crimes they were forced to commit as a result of being trafficked, the granting of a temporary residence for recovery and reflection period provided for in the 2018 Law on Foreigners, the adoption of the 2022 Law on Payment of Monetary Compensation to victims, and the creation of mobile teams comprising social workers, police and civil sector representatives for the identification of victims of human trafficking, which has led to an increase in identification. However, the Committee is concerned by reports that the State Party remains a country of origin, transit and destination for trafficking in persons, most commonly for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour, particularly affecting women, and that the capacity of the mobile teams is limited, in particular given the magnitude of the problem. It also remains concerned by the reports of involvement or complicity of public officials in the perpetration of the crime of trafficking and by the low amount of prosecution and convictions for this crime (arts. 7, 8 and 26)

**32. The State Party should further strengthen its efforts to effectively prevent, combat and punish trafficking in persons, particularly in regard for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour, including by:**

**(a) Ensuring that perpetrators, including public officials, are effectively prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence and that victims receive full reparation, including compensation;**

**(b) Enhance identification of victims or potential victims, particularly among groups in situations of vulnerability;**

**(c) Ensuring that sufficient financial, technical and human resources are allocated to all institutions responsible for identifying, preventing and protecting persons from trafficking including the mobile teams and State Commission on Compensation for Victims of Violent Crimes;**

**(d) Increasing prevention and awareness-raising campaigns for the general public and specialized training for all relevant State officials, including the judiciary, the prosecution authorities, law enforcement and border authorities, on standards and procedures for the prevention of trafficking, particularly that related to sexual exploitation and forced labour, and for the identification and referral of victims and on the rights of victims.**

#### **Treatment of aliens, including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and statelessness**

33. The Committee has received reliable reports of the overall inadequacy of the asylum procedure including limited access to free legal aid, unregulated status of Transit Centres, and the absence of an integration framework. The Committee is also informed of significant delays in the issuance of identification cards for asylum seekers, and that such documents are non-machine readable, limiting the capacity to obtain entry and exit visas, and by the fact that asylum seekers still lack personal identification numbers, restricting their access to the labour market, healthcare, education and social services. Furthermore, the Committee is stricken by reports of the detention of asylum-seekers, including women and children, at the Reception Centre for Foreigners in Gazi Baba, by the lack of access to legal assistance and

the absence of judicial review of detention decisions, as well as the limited use of alternatives to detention (arts. 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 24 and 26).

**34. The State Party should ensure that all persons seeking international protection have unfettered access to the national territory and to fair and efficient procedures for the individualized determination of refugee status or of eligibility for international protection in order to ensure respect for the principle of non-refoulement. It should also ensure that its legislation is in full compliance with those requirements. In particular, it should ensure that:**

**(a) The detention of migrants and asylum-seekers is used only as a measure of last resort and is reasonable, necessary and proportionate in the light of the individual's circumstances, in accordance with the Committee's general comment No. 35 (2014) on liberty and security of person, that alternatives to detention are used in practice, and that children are not deprived of their liberty for immigration-related purposes; and that asylum-seekers and migrants have access to qualified legal aid when the interests of justice so require;**

**(b) Machine-readable identity cards and personal identification numbers are provided promptly to all asylum-seekers in order to protect their freedom of movement and enjoyment of other human rights.**

**35. The Committee welcomes the ratification of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness; the enactment of the Law on Citizenship on 8 August 2021, addressing the ex-Yugoslavia statelessness caseload; and the efforts undertaken to address the situation of persons lacking personal documents. However, the Committee is concerned that over 150 individuals reportedly continue to be identified as stateless, most of them Roma, and that, despite the new Law on Civil Registry mandating immediate birth registration of every child regardless of the parents' legal status, instances of non-registration persist, particularly affecting children from the Roma community (arts. 2, 16, 24 and 26).**

**36. The State party should further continue its efforts to prevent and address statelessness, and ensure immediate and systematic birth and civil registration of all children, including from the Roma community. The State party should ensure that it offers free-of-charge birth certificates in hospitals before the mother is discharged and should aim to eliminate the root causes of the problem and ultimately ensure that all unregistered persons can access citizenship.**

#### **Access to justice, independence of the judiciary, and fair trial**

**37. The Committee welcomes the justice reforms system undertaken between 2017 to 2024, as well as the adoption the Development Strategy for the Justice system 2024-2028 but it is concerned about the lack of transparency in the appointment and promotion of judges and the lack of motivation of such decisions. In that sense, it welcomes the draft Law on the Judicial Council, which introduces a merit-based procedure for the selection of judges. The Committee is concerned about the long delays in the judicial review of administrative decisions and the lack of cooperation from the administration in such proceedings (arts. 2 and 14).**

**38. The State party should:**

**(a) Adopt promptly the Law on the Judicial Council in line with the provisions of the Covenant and relevant international standards, ensuring a selection of judges based on the criteria of competence and independence;**

**(b) increase the budgetary resources allocated towards the functioning of the courts to reduce the delays in judicial reviews;**

**(c) Ensure that the administration cooperates fully and in good faith in all judicial proceedings in which it is a party.**



### Right to privacy

39. The Committee welcomes the legal reforms undertaken such as the adoption of the Law on Monitoring of Communications and the Law on the Operational-Technical Agency. However, it is concerned about the reported instances of unlawful surveillance, in particular the Target-Fortress cases, and the fact that several individuals initially convicted have avoided accountability following the annulment of the first instance proceedings and the expiry of the statute of limitations. The Committee is further concerned by the lack of information on remedies available to individuals subjected to surveillance by the authorities; the lack of notification to affected persons, even in cases where such notification would not jeopardise investigations; and reports that evidence obtained through unlawful means has been admitted in court on the grounds of public interest (art. 14, 17 and 19).

**40. The State party should ensure that surveillance activities and any other interference with privacy is in full compliance with article 17 of the Covenant and with the principles of legality, proportionality and necessity. The State party should in particular ensure:**

**(a) that there are independent oversight mechanisms, including independent and impartial judicial review of surveillance activity;**

**(b) that affected persons are notified of the surveillance to which they have been subjected, where possible, and that they have access to effective remedies in cases of abuse;**

**(c) that evidence obtained unlawfully cannot be invoked against the accused if it undermines the fairness of the proceedings, and that the accused has the possibility to contest the evidence on such grounds.**

### Freedom of conscience and religious belief

41. The Committee welcomes the modifications to the Law on the Legal Status of a Church, Religious Community and Religious Group to facilitate registration and allow civil oversight of this process. However, the Committee remains concerned by reports that the registration process continues to be slow and tedious and that smaller religious communities are, in practice, not invited on equal footing to public acts as opposed to the five religious communities that are explicitly named in the Constitution (arts. 2, 18, 22 and 26).

**42. The State Party should take appropriate measures to ensure that the laws and procedures governing the registration of religious groups are applied consistently, expeditiously and without discrimination, and do not involve burdensome administrative requirements. The State party should guarantee in practice that the principle of equal treatment of religions is respected.**

### Freedom of expression

43. The Committee welcomes the modification of the criminal code allowing for crimes against journalists to be prosecuted by the public prosecutor ex officio and creating qualified forms of crimes perpetrated against journalists. It also welcomes the depenalisation of the offence of defamation, now protected under civil law. However, the Committee is concerned about the reported attacks against journalists, particularly those working on investigative journalism and corruption. The Committee is also concerned by allegations that several appointments in the Council of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services have been politically motivated. (art. 19)

**44. The State Party should take all measures necessary to guarantee the full enjoyment of freedom of expression, in accordance with article 19 of the Covenant and the Committee's general comment No. 34 (2011) on the freedoms of opinion and expression. In particular, it should:**

**(a) Prevent and combat all acts of harassment, intimidation and violence against journalists to ensure that they are free to carry out their work without undue control or interference, including fear of violence or, reprisals;**

**(b) Ensure the independence of regulatory institutions, such as the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, including through transparent and merit-based appointment of members.**

#### **Rights of the child**

45. Whilst welcoming the National Strategy for Deinstitutionalisation of children and the prohibition of solitary confinement of children in the amended Law on Execution of Sanctions 2019, the Committee is concerned about reports of cases of ill-treatment of children both at home and in institutions and in community-based care, especially Roma boys and disabled children, and about the high levels of child and forced marriages, in particular among Roma girls, and the low levels of social assistance to families with children, including with disabled children (arts. 2, 7, 23, 24, 26 and 27).

**46. The State Party should redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against children, particularly Roma and disabled children both at home and public institutions. The State Party should also:**

**(a) Ensure that all allegations of any form of violence against or abuse of children, especially in institutionalized settings, are promptly, impartially and effectively investigated, that those responsible are brought to justice, that all victims have access to effective remedies and appropriate protection and assistance, and continue providing alternatives to the institutionalization of children;**

**(b) Take measures to prevent child and forced marriages, in particular by continuing outreach activities, especially regarding the Roma community.**

#### **Participation in public affairs**

47. The Committee welcomes the efforts to facilitate access to voting rights for persons with disabilities, including through the application of braille alphabet during voting and elections. However, it highlights the persistent barriers faced by persons with disabilities in accessing polling stations, and their continued underrepresentation in elected positions. The Committee is also knowledgeable that the amendments to the Electoral Code adopted through a fast-track procedure in June 2025, which caused electoral irregularities including a significant increase in the number of signatures required for independent candidates to run in elections. Furthermore, it notes the legal uncertainty created by the subsequent annulment of these amendments by the Constitutional Court in the upcoming elections. It is also aware of the number of violations to the electoral code registered by the National Commission against Corruption (arts. 25–26).

**48. In accordance with article 25 of the Covenant and the Committee's general comment No. 25 (1996) on participation in public affairs and the right to vote, the State Party should take all measures necessary to ensure the full and effective enjoyment and exercise of the right to participate in public affairs, including aligning its electoral regulations and practices the provisions of the Covenant and the general comment. In particular, it should:**

**(a) Take measures to combat and prevent electoral irregularities by undertaking prompt, thorough and independent investigations;**

**(b) Ensure that there are no unreasonable or discriminatory barriers to the right of every citizen to run for election;**

**(c) Ensure that all infrastructure for elections and participation in public affairs, including polling stations, is accessible to all people, including persons with disabilities.**

#### **Rights of minorities**

49. The Committee welcomes the availability of opportunities to learn and use a second official language in schools in certain municipalities, as well as the establishment of grants supporting educational activities about the State Party's multiethnic society. However, the Committee is displeased about the persisting lack of adequate funding and staffing of bodies

such as the Agency for Community Rights Realisation. It is also aware of the lack of textbooks in several ethnic minority languages, the absence of effective monitoring mechanisms to assess the enjoyment and exercise of rights by different ethnic communities and the low level of representation of minorities in elected bodies. (art. 25 and 27)

**50. The State party should continue and step up its efforts to ensure the protection and recognition, both in law and in practice, of the rights of minorities. In this regard, the State Party should:**

**(a) Provide the Agency for Community Rights Realisation the necessary financial and human resources so that it can carry out its functions effectively;**

**(b) Ensure the availability of textbooks in ethnic minority languages;**

**(c) Strengthen its efforts to increase the representation of minority groups in elected and in decision-making public bodies.**

#### **D. Dissemination and follow-up**

**51. The State party should widely disseminate the Covenant, the two Optional Protocols thereto, its fourth periodic report and the present concluding observations, with a view to raising awareness of the rights enshrined in the Covenant among the judicial, legislative and administrative authorities, civil society and non-governmental organizations operating in the country, and the general public. The State party should ensure that the periodic report and the present concluding observations are translated into Macedonian, the official language of the State party.**

**52. In accordance with rule 75 (1) of the Committee's rules of procedure, the State party is requested to provide, by 18 July 2028, information on the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee in paragraphs 26 (Liberty and Security of the person), 34 (Treatment of aliens, including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and statelessness) and 46 (Rights of the Child) above.**

**53. In line with the Committee's predictable review cycle, the State party will receive in 2031, the Committee's list of issues prior to the submission of the report and will be expected to submit within one year its replies, which will constitute its fifth periodic report. The Committee also requests the State party, in preparing the report, to broadly consult civil society and non-governmental organizations operating in the country. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words. The next constructive dialogue with the State party will take place in Geneva in 2033.**