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Summary record of the 4th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 4 May 2010, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Marchan Romero

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Consideration of reports

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

Fifth periodic report of Colombia (E/C.12/COL/5); core document; concluding observations of the Committee on the fourth periodic report of Colombia (E/C.12/1/Add.74); list of issues (E/C.12/COL/Q/5) and written replies (E/C.12/COL/Q/5/Add.1) only in Spanish; non-official and abridged English translation of E/C.12/COL/Q/5/Add.1 document without a symbol circulated in the meeting room (continued)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Colombia took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 1 to 5 of the Covenant (continued)

2. **Mr. Piedrahita** (Colombia), responding to a question on poverty reduction, said that, in 2009, economic growth in Colombia had been 0.4 per cent, which although modest was exceptional for a Latin American country. The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of eradicating extreme hunger by 2015 was the goal on which Colombia was seeing the slowest progress. In Colombia in 2009, there had been 20 million poor people in the country living on \$4.50 or less per person per day. It had been difficult to carry out poverty-related calculations, in part owing to a change in methodology. The unemployment rate, although high, had fallen slightly in March 2010, a sign of economic recovery, despite the global crisis.

3. Regarding the amendment of tax legislation related to business investment, he explained that the establishment of an incentive plan had opened the way to a rapid increase in investments in Colombia, the effects of which would offset lower tax revenue in the future.

4. With regard to the growth in public expenditure on social policy, he explained that, thanks to the decision taken by the Government in 2001 to tie public spending to inflation rather than growth, social expenditure had increased in real terms. The new formula also had the advantage of being more stable, as it did not cause expenditure to depend on central Government revenue.

5. His country had a mixed health system that comprised a contributory scheme, made up of people who were able and those who were in official employment (approximately 45 per cent of the population), and a free State-subsidized scheme, which was recognized internationally as a very secure and efficient system, despite some problems with the quality of health care, common to a number of other countries. Although uncertainties occasionally still existed regarding the sustainability of the financing of the public system, the aim of the Government was to achieve 100 per cent coverage of the population.

6. Having denounced the coverage inequalities between the two systems, particularly with regard to the quality of health care received by children, the Constitutional Court had insisted that measures should be taken to address that situation. At the same time, the authorities had declared a social state of emergency and had adopted measures aimed at increasing taxation of tobacco, alcohol and gambling in order to finance the health system and social policy. Although the Constitutional Court had stated that there was not a situation of emergency justifying those measures, it had nevertheless approved them.

7. **Ms. Bonoan-Dandan** was surprised by the unspecific nature of information provided, in response to the very clear questions she had herself asked regarding the participation of marginalized sectors, such as indigenous communities. For example, she would like to know exactly how economic, social and cultural rights were taken into account in development policies.

8. **Mr. Herrera** (Colombia) said that for trade negotiations that resulted from national policies, the central Government organized consultation meetings with indigenous communities, while at the regional level, meetings were held with the peoples of the Amazon region, which discussed all types of negotiations and public policies. If those communities were not consulted, a number of laws could be declared unconstitutional, as had been the case with a law on rural development and forests. Prior consultations with indigenous communities were a fundamental right for those communities. With regard to development plans, the central authorities were making an effort to work with departmental and regional authorities — which were independent and developed their own plans — in order to ensure that human rights were taken into account.

9. **Mr. Piedrahita** (Colombia), referring to the reasons why the United States of America had not yet signed the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, explained that one of the obstacles was the security of trade union leaders. However, in view of the progress achieved in that area in Colombia, the United States was planning to reopen negotiations despite strong opposition from a number of trade union members and domestic politicians. It had to be borne in mind that the United States Congress was currently reluctant to enter into any trade agreements given the financial crisis and high level of unemployment. The Colombian authorities were convinced that the best way for a country like Colombia to make progress in areas such as economic, social and cultural rights was to trade with countries whose standards in those areas were higher than its own and to include, in the agreements, legal provisions allowing action to be taken against countries that did not meet their obligations.

Articles 6 to 9 of the Covenant

10. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim** noted with satisfaction that paragraph 128 of the fifth periodic report of the State party made reference to 29 international cooperation projects implemented in 2006 and wondered how those projects related to the problem of the right to work. Referring to paragraph 341 and subsequent paragraphs of the report under consideration, he was pleased to see the number of jobs created, but wondered about the distribution of those jobs between urban and rural areas and any potential geographic imbalance. The table in paragraph 421 of the report showed a net increase in the membership of both health systems between 2002 and 2005, particularly membership of the subsidized scheme. But that meant that 7 million Colombians were still not covered; Colombia should therefore take steps to address that worrying situation.

11. After reading out part of the first paragraph of the written reply of the Colombian Government to question 3 of the list of issues, he said that, in his opinion, considering that trade liberalization policies created a development spiral to the extent that the increased trade flows affected economic growth, created jobs and helped to improve social services for the population as well as to reduce poverty, the point of view expressed was only a general theory and that, when addressing human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, it was important to differentiate between short-, medium- and long-term effects.

12. With regard to the written reply to question 11 of the list of issues, he welcomed the satisfactory economic results mentioned for 2006, except for the attempt to reduce income inequalities, but he would like to know which provisions of the tax system favoured a redistribution of national revenue.

13. **Ms. Bonoan-Dandan** requested additional information on reports that, in recent years, there had been a decrease in the number of deaths and kidnappings of trade union members but an increase in cases of harassment against them. She also enquired whether contract workers were able to join a trade union and take part in negotiations and whether they had the right to strike. Regarding welfare payments (such as benefits), she was pleased to note that such payments were available, but nevertheless hoped that they were only palliative measures, as that solution, far from solving the problem, could lead to greater dependency. She also asked how the payments were financed.

14. **Mr. Kedzia** was concerned to note that the majority of job creations took place in the informal sector, which, according to a number of reports, employed up to 60 per cent of active workers. That would definitely affect social security. He asked for an explanation on the issue.

15. He also enquired whether discrimination in respect of employment occurred against members of communities of African descent or indigenous communities as a result of their skin colour, and had been the subject of complaints to the International Labour Organization. He requested clarification on refugees' access to the labour market, particularly in view of the complexity of visa procedures.

16. Finally, violations of trade union rights, which had been severely condemned by the Committee in its concluding observations on the fourth periodic review of the State party, were clearly still a very alarming problem, and he would like additional information on that question, since according to a number of sources the number of trade unionists killed in Colombia accounted for half the number killed in the whole world.

17. **Mr. Schrijver** was concerned about the rate of unemployment among young people, which was twice the rate for the rest of the population, as well as unemployment among indigenous communities and those of African descent. He was also concerned by the enormous size of the informal sector, which could only lead to violations of article 7 of the Covenant, particularly in the case of rural workers, given that two thirds of those workers did not even earn the minimum wage.

18. He would also like to know the underlying causes of violence against trade union members and whether it was true, as stated by the International Trade Union Confederation in a 2006 report, that police officers had taken part in those attacks. Finally, he asked whether any measures had been taken to end impunity.

19. **Mr. Sadi** said that he would like clarification on the functioning of Act No. 599. He would also like additional information on the results of the National Plan for the Eradication of Child Labour and the Young Workers' Programme, as it seemed that child labour was very widespread in the State party.

20. Although the right to strike was guaranteed, except for essential public services defined by the law, including the banking sector, he felt that the restrictions were too severe. Finally, in view of the very high number of trade unions (6,078), he wondered whether that degree of fragmentation of the trade union movement was deliberate. He asked what measures the authorities had taken, beyond the laws already adopted, to reduce the violence against trade union members.

21. **Ms. Barahona Riera** said that the Government's policy of undertaking large-scale projects, combined with the need to facilitate investment, had led to changes in a number of laws and restrictions on the rights of workers. She wished to know what measures the Colombian Government had taken to reinstate those rights, as well as the rights of indigenous communities, who were not consulted at the planning stage of the projects, even though that was required by law, so that they were deprived of their rights and the protection of the law.

22. **Ms. Ariza** (Colombia) said that, in view of the difficulties typically faced by developing countries, Colombia had for long been making use of international technical cooperation. USAID, for example, had provided invaluable assistance in the form of a labour inspection programme focusing on prevention, which the Colombian Government had taken over in 2008 and which had a staff of about 200. Colombia had also often received technical assistance from multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, in order to launch programmes to promote employment, especially youth employment, which was currently a very acute problem, and to reform the national vocational training system. Colombia was currently consulting technical cooperation bodies with a view to setting up a national unemployment insurance system.

23. **Mr. Piedrahita** (Colombia) said that three quarters of the Colombian population lived in urban areas, which had the highest unemployment levels. In 2009, the crisis had affected urban industrial and commercial sectors more than rural areas, where the unemployment rate had remained stable.

24. **Ms. Ariza** (Colombia) said that the urban and rural labour markets were very different and therefore difficult to compare. A number of years earlier, Colombia had implemented a development policy in the agro-industrial sector. That policy had led to the creation of many jobs, including non-agricultural jobs, which had increased by around 20 per cent; it had improved the quality of rural jobs and brought them closer to the social security system, which, however, needed adapting to the characteristics of rural employment, in order to gradually reduce the disparities between urban and rural areas.

25. **Mr. Piedrahita** (Colombia) said that the coverage of the subsidized health-care system, which had been 11.4 million people in 2002, had risen to 23.9 million by 2009. For the contribution-based health-care system, the equivalent figures were 11.4 million and 17.8 million respectively. Three and a half million people, namely 7 per cent of the population, had no health insurance at all. However, universal coverage had been written into the 2010 budget.

26. According to the Colombian Government's estimates, the income shortfall which needed to be made up, in order to help the poor emerge from poverty, stood at around US\$ 14.5 billion. Social aid programmes implemented to benefit the poor amounted to around US\$ 8.4 billion per year. Redistribution through the tax system made up around 58 per cent of the income gap.

27. While it was true that the short-term effects of free-trade agreements were rarely very positive, it was essential for Colombia to integrate into the global economy, if only to improve its ability to compete on the United States market with other countries from the region, but also because of the expected long-term positive impact. Colombia had nevertheless been able to rely on a safety net for a number of years, which had been growing progressively stronger and which would help to mitigate some of the negative aspects of those agreements. Moreover, the signed agreements contained clauses providing for assistance for industrial restructuring in sectors that were likely to be adversely affected.

28. **Ms. Gaviria** (Colombia) said that the Colombian Government had launched major programmes to eliminate violence through prevention and protection measures and to put an end to impunity. It had also adopted specific programmes to protect trade union leaders. Recalling the Tripartite Agreement on Freedom of Association and Democracy, signed in June 2006, she explained that the Ministry for Social Protection had a service specifically responsible for investigating cases of violations of freedom of association and provided some statistics: there had been only 2 convictions before 2002, as opposed to 83 in 2009 and 7 in the first quarter of 2010. The trade unionist protection programme, managed by the Ministry of the Interior and Justice, had received more than US\$ 92 million between 2001

and 2009 and would obtain US\$ 57 million in 2010. However, she wished to point out that not all the killings of trade unionists were linked to the victims' trade union activities. Statistics revealed that more than half of those killed were teachers. In 2009, 15 out of the 25 murdered trade unionists had been teachers. The Ministry for Education was therefore also actively involved in the field of prevention, and a specific act had been adopted to protect that category of workers.

29. It should also be mentioned that new legislation had been passed in the field of employment protection, in order to bring Colombian legislation into line with the ILO conventions the country had ratified, to impose harsher sentences on persons who committed acts of violence against trade unionists, and to eliminate existing inconsistencies with ILO standards.

30. **Mr. Piedrahita** (Colombia) explained that money transfers were intended for low-income families with children aged under 18, which received grants until the children completed secondary education. The grant itself, worth around US\$ 40 per month, was not very high, but was added to health-care and other welfare benefits. It had been observed that families on the borderline between the formal and the informal economy preferred to remain in the informal sector, in order to avoid losing their benefits and paying social contributions. The future of that programme, which covered 2.5 million families, should be carefully weighed up, as assessments had shown that it had a very positive impact on the children.

31. **Ms. Ariza** (Colombia) said that the Colombian Government had reviewed the programme *Familias en acción* (Families in Action) a few years before, to assess how to ensure that the programme was financially viable and that it had a sustainable impact on the families concerned. That review had led to the creation of a social protection network to combat extreme poverty (*Red Juntos*), the primary aim of which was to help poor families obtain access to other national social protection schemes. The programme aimed to take a comprehensive approach to the needs of families that went beyond the purely financial aspect of poverty. It could, for example, provide support to families whose child wished to enter higher or technical education, while offering opportunities for the mother to take on paid employment, and for all the members of the family to be provided with social security coverage.

32. **Mr. Piedrahita** (Colombia) said that, from the Colombian Government's point of view, those programmes were expected to enhance human capital. For example, a child that grew up in better health would be more likely to seize opportunities later on in life.

33. One effective way of measuring the importance of the informal sector was to compare persons who contributed directly to the health-care system and those whose contributions were subsidised (namely 45 and 55 per cent of beneficiaries, respectively). Companies employing fewer than 10 people were used as a basis for evaluating the informal sector. However, that method, although easy to apply, could pose difficulties because some of the companies included could, in fact, belong to the formal sector. For the Colombian Government, it was important to move people into the formal sector, not only to improve the income levels of the population, but also to increase tax revenue and the number of persons contributing to the health-care system. It was also vital to improving the situation on the labour market.

34. **Mr. Ayala Meléndez** (Colombia) said that the Independent Expert on human rights and extreme poverty had expressed an interest in the policies implemented in Colombia to eliminate extreme poverty, and had asked to visit the country, perhaps during the course of the year.

35. **Mr. Piedrahita** (Colombia) said on that issue that the Government had been contacted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) regarding assistance

which Colombia could provide to African countries in order to introduce strategies such as the *Red Juntos* programme. The Colombian Government was very interested in that idea.

36. **Mr. Herrera** (Colombia) said that the clause of the Constitution, whereby two seats in the Senate were reserved for candidates elected by indigenous communities (article 171 of the Constitution) did not exclude a similar provision for the election of candidates to the House of Representatives, for which indigenous candidates could of course stand in ordinary elections. Furthermore, Congress was considering an act setting aside quotas for indigenous Colombians and Afro-Colombians to fill posts in the civil service.

37. **Ms. Fonseca Jaramillo** (Colombia) said that a public policy was currently being prepared on the issue of discrimination against indigenous people and Afro-Colombians, which aimed to take a comprehensive approach to the issue, especially with regard to economic, social and cultural rights.

38. **Mr. Kedzia** said that he was under the impression, in the light of reports received, that persons seeking employment in Colombia, and refugees in particular, needed to have a secure job before they could obtain a visa, which meant that applications were very unlikely to succeed.

39. **Mr. Piedrahita** (Colombia) said that, in Colombia, which was not traditionally a destination country for immigrants, immigration had begun only a few years earlier. As a result, visa applications, including for senior posts, were restricted. The Colombian authorities were aware of the problem. It was necessary and desirable to implement changes, insofar as the country's economy was becoming increasingly internationalized.

40. The number of homicides was very high in Colombia, in relation to the total population. Substantial material and financial resources were used for protecting certain categories of people, such as trade unionists, judges and journalists. The situation had also significantly improved with respect to the number of cases brought to court.

41. A number of strategies had been implemented to deal with the high level of youth unemployment. Tax incentives had been offered to companies that made up at least one twentieth of their workforce with apprentices. The National Apprenticeship Service (SENA) had grown considerably and offered a wide range of services, in terms of apprenticeships and technical studies. A measure designed to ensure that an apprentice entering the labour market was paid a starting salary equivalent to 75 per cent of the minimum wage, later increasing to 100 per cent, was currently under consideration.

42. **Mr. Ayala Meléndez** (Colombia) said that a recommendation from the Committee on Migrant Workers had recently led to more flexible criteria for establishing categories and the treatment of refugees.

43. **Ms. Ariza** (Colombia) said that legislation had been passed in 2008 to introduce a strategy aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labour, with the support of all the national institutions concerned, employers and trade unions. That strategy covered the period 2008–2015 and focused in particular on commercial sexual exploitation and child labour in mining.

44. When combating child labour, one of the biggest problems was changing certain attitudes ingrained in Colombian culture, and making families understand that children were vulnerable and that their future was at stake. That was why social workers' visits were organised as part of the *Red Juntos* programme. In the coffee sector, for example, some families did not realize that making their children work entailed certain risks. Such visits were therefore necessary in order to explain those risks and raise awareness among families.

45. Significant efforts were also under way to encourage local authorities to take political action to put an end to child labour. The worst forms of child labour were very difficult to detect at the national level because central Government had very few investigators. The assistance of local authorities was therefore essential if the causes and nature of the phenomenon were to be identified. To that end, the Colombian Government was working closely with the International Labour Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).

46. Every two years since 2001, the central State administration had been carrying out a child labour survey as part of its general survey of employment issues. Although it did not enable the State party to detect cases in which children were subjected to the worst forms of child labour, that survey did provide a general overview of how many children were working, how many hours a day they worked and whether or not they were paid for the work they did. According to the most recent survey, carried out in 2009, the percentage of children engaged in child labour had fallen from 10 per cent to 4 per cent since 2001. The Government was nonetheless aware of the scale of the task it faced if the worst forms of child labour were to be definitively eliminated.

47. **Ms. Gaviria** (Colombia) said with regard to trade unions that the right to form associations was respected in Colombia and none of the State party's policies were hostile to trade unions. The right to strike was guaranteed, albeit with certain restrictions in the case of essential public services. Those restrictions applied to employees of the Central Bank, pursuant to specific legislation adopted in 1992. The Colombian delegation could provide members of the Committee with copies of the case law of the Colombian Constitutional Court and the various acts that dealt with that issue.

48. **Ms. Ariza** (Colombia) explained that under a landmark act adopted in 2008 the national Government was not permitted to rule on the legality of a strike. The act in question reserved that authority for the courts, thereby ensuring more objective decisions.

49. **Mr. Piedrahita** (Colombia) said that the businesses operated in special economic areas were not exclusively on a large scale but could also be of modest dimensions. Tax, tariff and other incentives were extended to enterprises that brought in a certain level of investment or created jobs, but there were no derogations from labour law or environmental legislation, with which strict adherence on the part of beneficiary companies was essential.

50. **Mr. Herrera** (Colombia) gave details of the procedures for prior consultation with ethnic groups. Consultations were arranged, for example, when legislation or administrative orders of nationwide application were under discussion. In the case of natural resources exploration and exploitation activities, all projects must be authorized by the Ministry of the Interior. The Ministry verified whether there were ethnic groups living in the area affected by the project and, where that was the case, a process of prior consultation with those communities and their representatives had to be organized.

Articles 10 to 12 of the Covenant

51. **Mr. Pillay**, citing article 13 of the Colombian Constitution, establishing the State's obligation to protect vulnerable persons and groups, asked whether the poverty reduction strategies in place specifically targeted those persons and groups, and whether they took account of economic, social and cultural rights. In view of the Committee's general comment No. 7 on the right to adequate housing, he would also like to know whether persons and groups who had been evicted from their land to make way for large-scale projects had been given access to other land, or, failing that, to housing or to fair compensation. In the same context, he asked for details of any national strategy that had been adopted to address the housing shortage, promote security of tenure and prevent forced evictions.

52. He also asked the Colombian delegation to provide the Committee with information on measures adopted to address the homelessness problem — especially given that housing subsidies were often used to buy food — and any plans to build social housing in Colombia. Lastly, he asked the delegation to address the points raised in paragraph No. 28 of the list of issues, which remained unanswered.

53. **Mr. Riedel** said that the improvements in vaccination and child mortality rates referred to in the fifth periodic report appeared primarily to have benefited city dwellers. Moreover, there was a lack of information about progress in that area over the past five years; the most recent data given both in the report under consideration and in the Colombian Government's written replies to the list of issues dated back to 2005.

54. Similarly, in the written replies to paragraph No. 24 of the list of issues, specific measures are referred to (e.g. centres at which cases of sexual violence are investigated and comprehensive victim care is provided, Act No. 975 of 2005) without any mention of the impact of such initiatives. Lastly, with regard to the right to health and access to safe drinking water and sanitation, he asked the State party to inform the Committee of the results, however limited, of the enterprise upgrading programme launched in 1998.

55. **Mr. Dasgupta** asked what action the Colombian Government planned to take to address the alarming levels of child malnutrition and nutritional anaemia in pregnant women mentioned in its fifth periodic report. He would also like to know why there had been no follow-on to the National Food and Nutrition Plan for 1996–2005 and why the Government had opposed the adoption in the Senate of a 2003 bill establishing a legal framework for food security.

56. Given that the Government's policy whereby farmers were encouraged to switch from food cultivation to biofuel crop production appeared to have exacerbated the country's malnutrition problem, he enquired whether, when speaking of "more productive land use", the Colombian delegation actually meant "market profitability" – a concept that effectively excluded any consideration of the poor's right to food.

57. **Ms. Barahona Riera**, noting the still very high incidence of violence against women in the State party, requested precise information about any results produced by the various programmes and measures detailed in the Colombian Government's written replies to paragraph No. 24 of the list of issues. With regard to trafficking in human beings, she asked what legislation applied in cases where women and children were used as "mules" to transport drugs and how such offences were classified under criminal law. She also enquired about the policies adopted to combat the country's rising drug use.

58. Despite commendable educational and preventive initiatives to promote sexual and reproductive health, the incidence of early pregnancies, terminations and sexually transmitted diseases remained very high and there was no free, universal provision of basic sexual and reproductive health services under the national health system. The semi-privatization of free primary education was also regrettable, constituting a step backwards in terms of the country's economic, social and cultural rights.

59. **Ms. Bonoan-Dandan** recalled that in paragraph 45 of its concluding observations to the State party's fourth periodic report the Committee had asked about the abortion problem. She had searched in vain for a response in the fifth periodic report and therefore urged the delegation to provide the relevant information. Turning to the right to food, she referred to the problems associated with the bilateral trade agreements in place. With the State party having chosen to focus its agricultural policies on exports, those agreements were in practice prejudicial to small-scale farmers and prevented them from accessing the credit essential to their activities.

60. **Mr. Schrijver** wished to emphasize that all children had rights, including child soldiers, children living with the irregular armed forces, and the large numbers of street children. With that in mind, she asked the Colombian delegation to confirm that children were perceived not as a source of concern but as holders of rights enshrined in national laws and in the international treaties of which the Covenant formed part.

61. **Mr. Kedzia** asked the Colombian delegation to indicate whether the recently adopted law on quotas, which guaranteed 30 per cent minimum female representation in civil service posts, had changed the prevailing situation, and if so, to what extent. He also requested clarification on the discrepancy between the World Bank's encouraging assessment of the country's situation and the grossly inadequate percentage of economically active women who were able to access a pension scheme (only 40 per cent). He also drew attention to the extremely low minimum age for marriage (12 years for girls and 14 for boys), the fact that 20 per cent rate of births were not registered, and the incidence of domestic violence, and requested information about the remedies available to victims, especially persons from minority groups. Lastly, he requested precise data about the current level of Internet access, in educational institutions in particular but also more generally in everyday life.

62. **Mr. Sadi** recalled that in 2006 the Committee on the Rights of the Child had recommended that the State party should raise the minimum age for marriage and take steps to ensure that births were registered. He hoped that the Colombian authorities had adopted measures to that end in the four years since. He also asked the delegation to either confirm or deny reports that children were recruited not just by the paramilitary groups but also by the Government, which allegedly used them as informers. Lastly, he asked whether there was any regional plan of action for combating trafficking in human beings and sex tourism.

Articles 13 to 15 of the Covenant

63. **Mr. Dasgupta** drew attention to a contradiction between the 100 per cent rate of basic education coverage referred to by the Colombian delegation and the more mixed results mentioned in paragraph Nos. 861, 877 and 893 of the report under consideration. He asked why some children still did not have access to basic education and a certain percentage of the population was still illiterate, and urged the State party to provide disaggregated data that would enable the Committee to gauge the progress made by the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

64. **Mr. Riedel** asked the State party to provide further information on its progress in ensuring that all persons were able to exercise their right to benefit from scientific advances and the application of those advances, as well as on the specific results of the various commendable initiatives referred to in paragraph No. 940 of the report under consideration.

65. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a Committee member, asked whether the State party had any system for protecting the intellectual property and traditional knowledge of its indigenous communities, other than the standard framework of the international conventions by which such communities did not always wish to be bound.

66. **Ms. Bonoan-Dandan** asked the Colombian delegation to what extent primary education was free and compulsory, and to clarify exactly which school years were covered. She also enquired about the place accorded to human rights education in school curricula and training courses for police officers, judges and public officials. She also urged the delegation to provide the information requested in paragraph No. 41 of the list of issues, since the notion of participation in and access to cultural life should not be confused with that of cultural diversity, which was addressed in paragraph No. 42.

67. Lastly, with regard to intellectual property and the right to health, she requested details of the free trade agreement about to be signed between the United States and

Colombia, which included provisions on intellectual property that could lead to a 40 per cent rise in pharmaceutical drug prices and, by 2020, deprive 5 million people of medicines.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.