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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Sixty-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1647th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 24 March 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. CHANET

later: Mr. EL-SHAFEI
(Vice-Chairperson)

later: Ms. CHANET

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 40 OF THE COVENANT

Third periodic report of Cyprus (CCPR/C/94/Add.1; HRI/CORE/1/Add.28)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Koursoumba (Cyprus), Mr. Stavrinakis (Cyprus) and Mr. Zackheos (Cyprus) took places at the Committee table.
2. Mr. ZACKHEOS (Cyprus), introducing the third periodic report of Cyprus (CCPR/C/94/Add.1; HRI/CORE/1/Add.28), drew attention to a supplementary report and to a new version of the core document which were before the members of the Committee.
3. His Government attached great importance to the promotion and protection of human rights, as reflected in its ratification of and accession to all the international human rights instruments, with the exception of the Second Optional Protocol to the Covenant, which was expected to be ratified shortly.
4. His Government's efforts to fulfil its obligations under the Covenant were affected by the tragic situation prevailing in his country since the Turkish invasion in 1974 and the subsequent Turkish occupation of 37 per cent of the territory of Cyprus. His Government remained committed to a peaceful settlement of the Cyprus problem on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.
5. Mr. STAVRINAKIS (Cyprus) said that his Government would make every effort in future to submit its periodic reports in a timely manner. A number of improvements had been made to his country's human rights legislation, particularly in such areas as the abolition of the death penalty, the eradication of sex discriminatory provisions in the laws of nationality, the enactment of a new law regulating assemblies and processions and the enactment of a law for asylum seekers. In other areas, such as the treatment of persons suffering from mental disorders, the law had been changed. In still other areas, such as the protection of personal data, marriage and the establishment of a family court, new laws were under consideration. Lastly, it had been decided to establish a national institution for human rights.

Part I of the list of issues

Issue 1: Equality of the sexes (article 3 of the Covenant)

6. The CHAIRPERSON read out the questions relating to issue 1: prevalence of discrimination against women in practice; concrete measures taken to eliminate all discrimination against women, especially in the areas of employment and remuneration, to enhance and reinforce their position and to provide and promote legal remedies for discrimination.
7. Mr. STAVRINAKIS (Cyprus) said that his delegation would prefer to address that issue at a later stage.

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Issue 2: Violence against women and children (articles 3, 23 and 24 of the Covenant)

8. The CHAIRPERSON read out the questions relating to issue 2: progress achieved with respect to the situation of women and children victims of violence; new law on the prevention of violence in the family and on the protection of victims.

9. Mr. STAVRINAKIS (Cyprus), referring to paragraphs 63 to 68 of document CCPR/C/94/Add.1, said that the law providing for the prevention of violence in the family and for the protection of victims was in force, but that difficulties had been encountered in its effective application. A committee was considering amendments to the law in order to make it more effective. Some of the amendments being contemplated involved the use of videotaped statements by victims of violence so as to avoid their having to appear in court. That did not mean, however, that an accused person would not have the opportunity to cross-examine a witness.

Issue 3: Prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (article 7 of the Covenant)

10. The CHAIRPERSON read out the questions relating to issue 3: follow-up to the memorandum submitted to the Minister of Justice and Public Order; bill for the amendment of the Law for the Commissioner of Administration; powers and functions of the Commissioner with respect to complaints of ill-treatment by the police.

11. Ms. KOURSOU MBA (Cyprus) said that the Committee against Torture had examined the second periodic report of Cyprus at its November 1997 session and had made a number of favourable comments.

12. With regard to the memorandum, as referred to in paragraph 26 of the report, the matter was still pending.

13. With regard to the bill for the amendment of the Law for the Commissioner of Administration, or ombudsman, referred to in paragraph 89 of the report, the bill had been enacted into law and the ombudsman now had the power to examine complaints of ill-treatment of individuals, and a number of such complaints had been reviewed in recent years. In 1994 there had been one valid complaint, and, pursuant to a request from the counsel for the complainant, the Attorney-General had given authorization for the institution of a private prosecution against the persons accused. In 1995 there had been three valid complaints; in the first case, proceedings had been instituted but had later been dismissed because of the complainant's refusal to give evidence. In the second case, involving a Turkish Cypriot, the Council of Ministers had appointed a criminal investigator and, pursuant to the investigator's findings, her Government had paid compensation to the complainant. In the third case, the ombudsman had found that there was a prima facie case of ill-treatment; however, in view of the complainant's refusal to give evidence, criminal proceedings could not be initiated, and the matter was still pending. In 1996 there had been two valid complaints; the cases were still pending. In 1997 there had been one valid

complaint; the report was still under preparation. The cases had all been reported to the Committee against Torture.

Issue 4: Use of weapons by the police (articles 6 and 9 of the Covenant)

14. The CHAIRPERSON read out the questions relating to issue 4: violations of the rules and regulations governing the use of weapons by the police and security forces; investigation and prosecution of such acts, and punishment of the perpetrators.

15. Ms. KOURSOU MBA (Cyprus) said that the use of weapons by the police was not a normal practice. During the period under review, there had been only one case in which the police had used weapons, and that had involved a hostage-taking incident. The Council of Ministers had immediately appointed the then President of the Supreme Court to investigate the incident. The inquiry had been conducted in accordance with all rules of evidence, leading to the conclusion that the use of force had not been excessive. The complainants had then filed an application with the European Commission on Human Rights, which had been referred to the European Court of Human Rights. The Court, by a majority decision, had found that the use of force by the police had not been more than absolutely necessary, and, therefore, that her Government had no liability in the matter.

Issue 5: Imprisonment for civil debt (article 11 of the Covenant)

16. The CHAIRPERSON read out the questions relating to issue 5: concerns expressed by the Committee in its previous Concluding Observations; measures taken to abolish imprisonment for civil debt.

17. Mr. STAVRINAKIS (Cyprus) said that, while a bill for the amendment of the relevant legislation had been adopted, although it had been approved by the Attorney-General, its submission to the Council of Ministers had been unaccountably delayed. The bill would give a court the power to investigate a debtor's financial situation, and, accordingly, to issue an order for collection of the debt. In the case of employed persons, the court would be able to direct an employer to withhold a portion of a debtor's wages to be paid to creditors. Self-employed persons would be ordered to make payments directly to their creditors; if they failed to comply without sufficient reason, the court could impose criminal fines.

18. The bill also provided for the consolidation of applications against a particular debtor. If the court was satisfied that the debtor would not be in a position to pay within a reasonable time, the debtor could be declared bankrupt and proceedings taken against him in accordance with law.

Issue 6: Freedom of assembly (article 21 of the Covenant)

19. The CHAIRPERSON read out the questions relating to issue 6: outcome of the review of part II of the Criminal Code and of the Assemblies and Processions Law; compatibility with the Covenant of restrictions on the exercise of freedom of assembly under the proposed bill.

20. Mr. STAVRINAKIS (Cyprus) said that the bill referred to in paragraphs 241 to 244 of the report was pending before the legislature. Under the old law, a permit had been required for assemblies of five or more persons; under the proposed new law, assemblies of 20 or more persons would be legal and would not require a permit, but notice must be given to the appropriate authority. The appropriate authority might, however, wish to impose certain restrictions for the preservation of public order. Further information on the subject was contained in section (b) of the supplementary report.

Issue 7: Protection of the child (article 24 of the Covenant)

21. The CHAIRPERSON read out the questions relating to issue 7: concrete measures taken to protect the rights of the child; criminal responsibility beginning at the age of 7; persons 16 years of age considered to be adult offenders; marriageable age defined as the onset of puberty.

22. Mr. STAVRINAKIS (Cyprus) regarding the age of criminal responsibility drew attention to section 9 of the supplementary report.

Issue 8: Non-discrimination (articles 2(3), 25 and 26 of the Covenant)

23. The CHAIRPERSON read out the questions relating to issue 8: discrimination, surveillance and harassment by the authorities of Cypriot citizens of Turkish origin, particularly those born after 1974; measures taken to prevent the occurrence of such discrimination; remedies available to the victims.

24. Mr. STAVRINAKIS (Cyprus) said that his delegation would prefer to address that issue at a later stage.

25. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee would hear the State party's replies to the questions relating to issues 1 and 8 at a later meeting. She invited the members of the Committee to pose further questions relating to the issues in part I of the list.

26. Mr. EL-SHAFFI noted that, as a consequence of the events that had occurred in 1974, resulting in occupation of part of the territory of Cyprus, the Government could not ensure the application of the Covenant in areas not under its control; moreover a number of its citizens were still missing. As the delegation was no doubt aware, a non-governmental organization had proposed the establishment of a commission of inquiry to look in to the cases of disappearances; it would be useful to know the delegation's reaction. He would also be grateful if the delegation could inform the Committee briefly about the prospects for success of the United Nations efforts to bring peace to Cyprus.

27. During its consideration of the second periodic report, the Committee had expressed concern that article 7 of the Constitution provided for very broad exceptions to the right to life; the reporting State should be more specific about efforts to amend that article. Concern had also been expressed regarding the instructions governing the use of force, which gave broad discretionary powers to the police. Another area which needed clarification was the extended nature of pre-trial detention and the possibility that detainees might be

subject to abuse. The reporting State should indicate whether police officers and lower-ranking officials were provided with adequate education and training to preclude that from happening.

28. Lastly, he would appreciate it if the delegation could elaborate further on the reasons why the proposed bill to abolish imprisonment for civil debt had taken so long.

29. Mr. ANDO said that, he, too, was concerned at the delay in the final adoption of the proposed bill to abolish imprisonment for civil debt.

30. With regard to issue 6, he welcomed the favourable developments mentioned by the representative of Cyprus; further details were needed, however, concerning the kinds of conditions that could be imposed on the holding of assemblies.

31. With regard to issue 7, he would be grateful for specific information on cases in which children aged 12 had been held criminally responsible.

32. Lastly, with regard to issue 3, the representative of Cyprus had stated that complaints declared valid by the Commissioner of Administration had been dismissed because the complainants had refused to come forward. It would be interesting to learn whether cultural or community pressure had been exerted on those complainants to dissuade them from testifying.

33. Mr. KLEIN, noting that the legislative changes mentioned in the periodic report and the updated supplementary report were, for the most part, still pending, said that the inescapable conclusion was that little had in fact been altered. He wondered why the Legislature was so slow in acting. When the delegation later addressed issue 1, he would appreciate specific information on any actual changes in the law.

34. Regarding issue 3, it would be interesting to know the outcome of the investigation of police brutality carried out by the Commission of Inquiry referred to in paragraph 88 of the report. It was not clear if that Commission was an ad hoc body whose functions would be taken over by the proposed office of the Ombudsman (para. 89 of the report) or, if not, what its relationship would be with that office.

35. While he did not question the reliability of Ms. Koursoumba's information relating to issue 4, it was simply astonishing to him that in the past 10 years there had been only one instance in Cyprus where the police had used firearms.

36. Ms. EVATT welcomed the Government's clear intention to respond to previous recommendations made by the Committee, even though it was still mainly a matter of promise for the future. She asked, under issue 1, whether among the reforms to ensure greater equality for women, the Government was contemplating adoption of a comprehensive law guaranteeing equal rights for women in education, employment and the like.

37. Under issue 2, in connection with forced prostitution and trafficking in women, the report suggested (paras. 146 and 148) that the Government was willing

to take action against those responsible for such exploitation of women, and the supplementary report indicated (p. 12) that the laws in that area were being reviewed. She would like to know if there was any plan to adopt a law to assist the victims and allow them to pursue remedies against their exploiters, and one governing the situation specifically of domestic workers in Cyprus, particularly those coming from South-East Asia who might be the victims of abuse.

38. She was glad that the age of criminal responsibility of children was being raised (supplementary report, p. 15) but believed it should be raised to 12 rather than 10 years. The supplementary report seemed to imply that the juvenile age of criminal responsibility would be raised from 16 years to 18, whereas the report (para. 252) seemed to indicate that young people over the age of 16 would be treated as adult offenders. Also on the question of children's rights, would the Government be taking any action to guarantee the rights of extra-nuptial children to a name and to citizenship? She wondered if the new minimum marriageable age would be the same for men as for women.

39. Mr. BUERGENTHAL observed that the Government seemed to be having trouble getting its proposed laws enacted. Concerning the 1992 law that had been enacted to amend an earlier 1967 law punishing incitement to racial, religious or ethnic discrimination (para. 46 of the report), it would be interesting to know if any cases had been brought under it and how they had been handled. While he understood that none of the cases involving torture had led to convictions (para. 87 of the report), there were always a number of other administrative measures that could be taken even in the absence of criminal convictions. It was not clear to him how the whole system for preventing cruel treatment or torture worked in Cyprus. Could, for instance, the Ombudsman bring administrative proceedings himself, or did he simply refer cases to the Attorney-General; and could the Attorney-General on his own bring administrative proceedings for the reductions in rank or dismissals? He would also like to know whether there were any training programmes for police officials to reinforce the prohibition on torture.

40. Regarding issue 6 and the declaration of states of emergency (para. 243 of the report), he would like information on any judicial remedies allowing a challenge to actions taken during the states of emergency or to the legality of the very declaration of a state of emergency.

41. Mr. BHAGWATI expressed the hope that the ongoing political mediation would be successful so that the Government could finally exercise control over the whole territory of Cyprus and ensure the human rights of every citizen of the country. In connection with issue 8, he would like to know how many missing persons cases had been investigated since Turkish forces had landed on the island in 1974, whether there had been any investigations of the instances in which Greek Cypriots had been killed by right-wing members of the Turkish armed forces, and what the outcome had been. He, too, would like to know if there was any institutional mechanism to investigate charges of police brutality and torture.

42. Regarding the judiciary, it would be interesting to have details of any cases heard by the Supreme Council of Judicature (para. 135 of the report) and to know whether the judicial immunity accorded to the President and judges of

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the High Court (para. 188 of the report) extended to Supreme Court judges and judges of the Supreme Council. He also wondered what provisions there were for legal aid to indigent persons who wished to institute court proceedings; and whether the military courts had any jurisdiction over wrongs committed by the military against civilians.

43. Since it appeared that only Greek Cypriots had access to the family courts (p. 13 of the supplementary report), it would be interesting to know if the proposed bill consolidating the family courts would also widen their application to include Turkish Cypriots.

44. It seemed that under the Supplies and Services Transitional Powers Continuation Act, persons could be directed to perform services on pain of imprisonment, which itself would involve the obligation to work; he would like to hear the Government's position on that legislation, for it contravened the prohibition of forced labour under article 8. Also, he would like information on the cases heard under the legislation providing for the prevention of violence in the family and for the protection of victims (para. 63 of the report); and on whether the Government had set up a central registry of detainees and their places of detention, for the information of their families.

45. Mr. YALDEN asked what the Ombudsman did apart from investigating complaints of police brutality, and whether the establishment of his post had been found to be helpful. It would be interesting to know how many complaints had proved valid and how he had dealt with them. Regarding the establishment of a new national institution for human rights (supplementary report, p. 12), it was hard to see how it could be said to be independent of the Government if, as indicated, it would be composed of civil servants. With regard to issue 8, he wondered to whom complaints about racial or ethnic discrimination could be brought, especially in the case of the Turks in the south of the country. The latest report of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) spoke of police dealings with the Turkish population that amounted to discrimination, and he would like to know if the Government had acted on the UNFICYP recommendation that training in the matter should be given to the police.

46. Ms. MEDINA QUIROGA asked the delegation to focus on the impact of articles 12, 18, 23 and 24 of the Covenant on the family law of Cyprus and the legal status of women, when addressing issue 1. Regarding issue 2, she would like to know how the legislation for the prevention of violence in the family and for the protection of victims (para. 63 of the report) had operated in practice since its enactment. Concerning children, she found it shocking that children could be held criminally responsible as early as the age of 7; even 14 years seemed too young. With the proposed change in the minimum marriageable age, it was not clear what would happen to all the family laws in the country that impinged upon marriage.

47. Regarding imprisonment for civil debt, she wondered if a court order criminalizing the failure to pay debts (supplementary report, p. 5) meant that the debtor would be imprisoned.

48. Mr. POCAR said that it was encouraging that the Government had paid heed to earlier Committee recommendations in drawing up its reports. On the right to

freedom of assembly, he endorsed Mr. Ando's comments on the proposed Assemblies and Processions Law of 1998 (supplementary report, pp. 2-3), and would like to know whether the suspensions of the right to freedom of assembly outlined in subparagraph (d) entailed the same guarantees as in a state of emergency, where the justifications seemed similar; and also whether article 4 of the Covenant would apply in such instances. Otherwise, such suspensions would not be justified under the restrictions in article 21 of the Covenant.

49. Mr. PRADO VALLEJO observed that the report discussed the laws governing the use of force by the police, but said nothing about the actual practice of the police in Cyprus. What had the Government done to see that the laws against arbitrary arrests and torture had been enforced? Paragraph 85 of the report referred to seminars for the police, but he wondered if that had been enough to ensure compliance with human rights norms.

50. He would appreciate information on the results of the ongoing political negotiation, on progress achieved towards reducing violence.

51. While some mention had been made in the report of compensation having been paid in torture cases, additional information should be provided regarding the number of cases in which compensation had been required.

52. Mr. LALLAH said that it would be interesting to learn whether Cyprus had considered setting up a permanent and independent police review board. Referring to civil debt, the reporting State should also clarify whether a person could be imprisoned for non-payment of a debt. If debtors could, indeed, face criminal charges, adjustments should be made to the bill regarding civil debtors, according to the supplementary report, the judgement debtor was a "compellable witness"; that might be contrary to article 14 of the Covenant, which stated that no one could be compelled to testify against himself in criminal cases. Furthermore, he regretted the fact that a number of young men had been reported missing since the division of Cyprus. While there was no clear solution to the problem, the reporting State should keep in mind that the situation violated various rights, both of the victims and their families, guaranteed by the Covenant. Lastly, it was unclear whether an order by the Council of Ministers revoking the right to assemble, which was a fundamental right under articles 4 and 21 of the Covenant, would be subject to review by the courts.

53. Mr. SCHEININ, referring to the case of the dismissal of three police officers by the Council of Ministers, said that it would be useful to know whether the dismissals could be contested in the courts.

54. Mr. STAVRINAKIS (Cyprus), after pointing out that the bills concerning civil debt and assemblies and processions had yet to be enacted into law, said that he had taken note of the reservations expressed by the Committee and would convey them to his Government.

55. Regarding the non-payment of debts, which was quite a problem in Cyprus, it was important to remember that creditors had rights too. In any case, debtors were imprisoned only as a last resort and after a court had determined that they had the means to pay.

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56. In reference to the age of criminality, there had been no case of a 7 to 12-year-old child having been proven criminally responsible.

57. Ms. KOURSOU MBA (Cyprus) said that the Attorney-General in Cyprus was independent of the Government and could not be removed until the mandatory retirement age. The office of the Attorney-General had no administrative powers but simply advised the Government and prosecuted criminal cases. Almost all police officers had completed a course on human rights issues given by the office of the Attorney-General; they were required to write a final paper to prove that they had understood the issue.

58. Regarding the hostage-taking incident referred to earlier, he said that the reason there had been such an outcry was precisely because it was so unusual to see the police drawing their guns; the Government had reacted promptly by appointing an independent board of enquiry.

59. The Government had not felt the necessity, thus far, to establish an independent, permanent board to safeguard detainees against ill-treatment by the police since there were so few incidents; however, it could consider that possibility. Whenever there was a complaint, the Council of Ministers appointed an ad hoc committee to consider the issue.

60. The Attorney-General had made it very clear that he would not tolerate human rights violations, including by the police. He had even gone so far as to discontinue criminal prosecution of a drug trafficker who had been ill-treated while in custody, and had even advised him to file a complaint with the Ombudsman. The private sector was also involved in raising public awareness of human rights issues, as were such organizations as Amnesty International.

61. In answer to the question regarding the dismissal of three policemen, he said that the three policemen had appealed to the Supreme Constitutional Court of Cyprus alleging violation of their human rights and had won their appeal.

62. Individuals could initiate civil proceedings themselves on grounds of human rights violations or they could file a complaint with the Attorney-General, who could then institute criminal proceedings. The office of the ombudsman was a permanent body, with powers to inquire into any actions of the administration. In 1994, its powers had been expanded to include the power to investigate complaints of human rights violations mainly by the police. The Ombudsman reported to the Council of Ministers, or, in cases involving human rights violations, directly to the Attorney-General. The latter could either institute criminal proceedings or advise the Government to pay compensation.

63. Acting on the recommendations of the Committee, the Government had introduced a new system whereby the police were required to keep a record of the material particulars of detainees in writing. Believing that ill-treatment of detained persons took place during interrogations by the police, the Government had prepared a bill under which the taking of statements by the police would be videotaped. It was hoped that that measure would further discourage the police from ill-treating people in their custody. The bill would also amend the existing evidential system to allow such recordings to be admissible in court.

64. By valid complaints, she meant those complaints that had been investigated by the office of the Ombudsman and had been substantiated as serious cases. All the evidence she had given to the Committee had come from information submitted by that office. There had been some complaints in 1994 and 1995 about the harassment of members of the Turkish Cypriot community. Conditions had improved considerably since then as a result of the re-education of the police force in all aspects of human rights. Indeed, the Constitution guaranteed human rights for every person, Cypriot and foreigner alike. International and regional conventions ratified by Cyprus took precedence over domestic law, except for the provisions of the Constitution. There had been no complaints by Turkish Cypriots in recent years, nor had any been recorded by the United Nations office in Limassol, where most Turkish Cypriots lived.

65. Victims of torture could file direct civil action in civil courts and be awarded punitive damages. In addition the Government could and had awarded ex gratia compensation payments.

66. Mr. ZACKHEOS (Cyprus) said that the proposal regarding missing persons put forward by an international non-governmental organization had not been implemented because his Government wanted to give the committee which had been established on that issue in 1984, a chance to produce results. Thus far it had been hampered in its efforts by a lack of cooperation of both sides. However, on 31 July 1997 after a long stalemate, the President of Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot leader had signed, under the auspices of the United Nations, a humanitarian agreement concerning the question of missing persons. There had been an initial exchange of information regarding places of burial of missing persons, and there would be further exchanges.

67. With regard to efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Cyprus question, the Secretary-General had appointed a Special Adviser on Cyprus in 1997 to initiate a new round of efforts, but the situation remained deadlocked, largely because of Turkey's insistence that Cyprus should suspend its efforts to become a member of the European Union. The Turkish Cypriot leader was now demanding recognition of his pseudo-State in the north, which had been created and maintained through the use of force, as a precondition for his return to the negotiating table. The Secretary-General would meet the Turkish Cypriot leader shortly in a final effort to salvage the talks. His Government, for its part, had assured the Secretary-General that it was ready to conclude a comprehensive agreement that guaranteed the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots.

68. Mr. STAVRINAKIS (Cyprus) said that the bill on the acquisition of Cypriot nationality by aliens had only just been approved. The new family court, under legislation to be enacted during the current year, would not have jurisdiction over Turkish Cypriots, who had their own family law and courts. He would be preparing a comprehensive bill on the equality of women. He hoped that it would be enacted in a few years and would cover all the Covenant's provisions in that regard. He would also look into the matter of paying compensation to victims of forced prostitution. The marriageable age would be the same for both sexes and would be covered by the new law on marriage.

69. The proposed National Institution for Human Rights would be independent and would not be under the control of any ministry. Its executive committee would be composed of government officials, and it would be responsible for preparing reports submitted to international treaty bodies. The plan for the operation and establishment of the executive committee was in its early stages and would be submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval. The new Institution would also have an advisory committee composed of members from a wide spectrum of the private sector. One of its functions would be to hear complaints of human rights violations. It would advise complainants on where to direct their complaints.

70. Concerning legal aid, two bills were ready to be introduced. One would provide legal aid for the accused in criminal proceedings, while the other would provide for legal aid to complainants in cases of human rights violations. As to the law on domestic violence, which had received the unanimous approval of the House of Representatives, a committee was finalizing amendments to it in order to relax some of the rigid rules on the admissibility of evidence in such cases. One such amendment would provide for the admissibility of videotaped statements. A victim of violence was entitled under the law to punitive compensation, whether such violence was perpetrated by a member of the family or by the authorities.

71. The fusion of the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court had been dictated by necessity. The current court had the same jurisdiction as the two previous courts and its members enjoyed the same immunity. Regarding the question about the law concerning supplies and services, under which striking employees in sectors considered to provide essential services could be compelled to work, he said that it dated from the colonial era and would have been repealed some years earlier but for the fact that considerable controversy had arisen over the bill which was to have replaced it.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.