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HUMAN RI GHTS COMMI TTEE

Sixty-eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1830th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 27 March 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. MEDI NA QUI ROGA

later: M. AMOR
(Vice-Chairperson)

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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 (continued)

Second periodic report of Guyana (continued) (CCPR/ C/ GUY/ 99/ 2 and CCPR/ C/ 68/ L/ GUY)

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

Right to life (article 6 of the Covenant)

2. The CHAIRPERSON read out the questions relating to article 6: statistics on death sentences and appeals against them; steps to ensure that persons were not sentenced to death contrary to the provisions of the Covenant; investigations, prosecutions and convictions in cases of extrajudicial killings by the police.

Equality before the law, discrimination and rights of people belonging to minorities (articles 26 and 27 of the Covenant)

3. The CHAIRPERSON read out the questions relating to articles 26 and 27: legislation to prohibit discrimination on grounds stated in article 26; steps to overcome racially and ethnically discriminatory practices between ethnic groups; steps to update the Amerindian Act.

4. She invited the delegation of Guyana to reply to those questions and to others raised at the preceding meeting.

5. Mr. LUNCHEON (Guyana) said that, within the framework of the constitutional reform process, the Government had established an Indigenous People's Commission, which would be responsible for updating the Amerindian Act and ensuring its compatibility with the Covenant. It would also develop a national position with regard to indigenous peoples. The demarcation of lands belonging to Amerindian communities was a controversial political issue. Tribal land boundaries had been established during the colonial period. In 1993, the Parliament had determined that any revision of boundaries should be conducted in relation to the previous demarcations, a process requiring, first, the demarcation of former boundaries and, second, a discussion about their revision. The Government had begun demarcating the boundaries for the more than 50 indigenous communities. Many communities had assented to the process and 20 had thus far had their boundaries demarcated. Others, however, had refused to permit the demarcation of former boundaries, insisting that new boundaries should be drawn on the basis of current realities. The Government had been criticized and held accountable for the delay in demarcating boundaries. It nonetheless hoped that acceptance of that exercise by some communities would erode the resistance of other communities, and anticipated a successful conclusion.

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6. The difficulties experienced by Amerindians in exercising their rights under article 27 were unlikely to disappear. The Government was striving to preserve their cultures and to protect their rights to ancestral lands, a term as yet undefined under Guyanese law. The process would call for continued discourse, understanding and willingness to find solutions.

7. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had recently decided to publish all information related to Guyana's obligations under the Covenant on the official Government Web site. The Ministry of Information, which maintained the site, also conducted regular radio broadcasts on topical issues; he expected to be invited to comment on the Committee's consideration of the second periodic report. He had recently learned that the Committee had its own Web site; that address would be published on the official Web site as well.

8. Mr. LUNCHEON (Guyana) said that many Covenant articles were covered in the Constitution under the rubric of fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals; others had not yet been incorporated. The Constitution Reform Commission had recommended a constitutional provision which would empower the courts to pay due regard to international laws and conventions.

9. One of the supplementary documents he had circulated at the current meeting identified the kinds of complaints that were handled under the Ombudsman Act. The Government recognized the shortcomings of that Act, in particular the inability to enforce it. Under the current procedure, the findings of the Office of the Ombudsman were submitted to Parliament, which determined how they would be addressed. The Act was currently being reviewed within the context of the constitutional reform process.

10. The Guyanese Constitution stipulated that no person should be deprived of his life intentionally save in execution of the sentence of a court under the laws of that country. In the well-considered view of the Guyanese people, capital punishment was not inconsistent with respect for human life. He regretted that he could not provide current information on the application of the death penalty; the Government was compiling that information and would forward it to the Committee subsequently.

11. Ms. GALTÁN DE POMBO said that she would like more precise and complete information on preventive detention, and in particular on children remanded to institutions such as the New Opportunity Corps and the Belfield Girls' School. How were such children rehabilitated?

12. She would also like to know the nature and functions of the Interinstitutional Human Rights Commission, established in the 1980s, how it had evolved since its founding, what was its relationship to the Office of the Ombudsman, and whether its role had been reviewed by the Constitution Reform Commission.

13. She regretted the delegation's inability to provide statistics on the application of the death penalty, in particular the status of appeals. Finally, it would be useful to know whether a debate was taking place in Guyana on the elimination of the death penalty and, if so, what was the nature of that debate.

14. Mr. BHAGWATI said that the expectations raised in the international community by Guyana's recent hosting of two important international colloquia on human rights law had unfortunately not been met. He asked when the constitutional reform process was likely to conclude, and whether it would result in a new constitution.

15. Furthermore, the constitutional article guaranteeing freedom of expression, discussed in paragraph 77 of the report, contained far too many exceptions. The question must be asked how the protection of fairness and balance in the dissemination of information to the public and the prevention of harm to a corporate body complied with article 19, paragraph 3.

16. The Government should describe how mechanisms to ensure independence of the judiciary operated in practice. He would also like to know the nature of the contempt of court law, and, in particular, what occurred if a judge was accused of corruption.

17. He inquired whether the import of newsprint was still controlled, whether newspapers and journals were subject to restrictions and, if so, how those restrictions were applied. Finally, he would like to know the composition and functions of the Indigenous People's Commission. What percentage of its membership was Amerindian?

18. Mr. SCHEININ said that he regretted that, despite the lateness of the report, it did not include current information.

19. The supplementary document containing the recommendations of the Constitution Reform Commission was of particular interest, especially the recommendation that courts should pay due regard to international law and conventions. Since international instruments were binding on States and provided a framework for practical interpretation, there were good reasons to accord them an independent place within a constitutional system. The broad list of grounds on which discrimination was prohibited complied satisfactorily with article 26 of the Covenant. He welcomed the recommendation that positive aid to disadvantaged groups should not be regarded as discrimination.

20. The anti-discrimination clauses within the Constitution, however, were accompanied by a series of exemptions, and therefore did not comply with article 26. He would like to know whether the constitutional reform would view the right not to be discriminated against as an independent right, applicable to all fields of life and society.

21. Among the rights and freedoms under review by the Constitution Reform Commission, there was no mention of the right to life. Admittedly, Guyana was not a party to the Optional Protocol. Under articles 2 and 6 of the Covenant, however, States parties were obligated to work towards abolition of the death penalty. Current opinion was that the death penalty was incompatible with the right to life because it contributed to an atmosphere of violence and impaired human dignity. The right to life should therefore appear on any agenda for constitutional reform.

22. With regard to indigenous rights, the recommendations of the Constitution Reform Commission included self-determination for indigenous people and establishment of an Indigenous People's Commission to make recommendations on land rights and other matters concerning them. Self-determination implied control, whereas power of recommendation was ambiguous. The delegation had referred to a mechanism of consultation, and he would appreciate clarification on how the process worked and whether the indigenous group consulted had any veto or right to withhold consent. The enjoyment of one's culture provided for in article 27 of the Covenant was closely related to the right of self-determination set forth in article 1, since it included the practice of traditional forms of economic life, which depended on control over the means to do so. Article 1, paragraph 2, provided that a people might not be deprived of its own means of subsistence. He would like to know in particular whether the demarcation process gave indigenous peoples title to the mineral rights of their ancestral lands and, if not, what control they exercised with regard to mining on their lands.

23. Ms. EVATT pointed out that the delegation, in its answers concerning the incorporation of the Covenant into Guyanese law, had not yet given specific examples of court decisions upholding Covenant rights subsumed in the provisions of the Constitution or laws of Guyana. That information would be much appreciated.

24. She would like to know whether it was true that the police force was chiefly composed of Afro-Guyanese and, in that case, whether any effort was being made to increase the representation of other groups, since a more balanced composition might help to ease racial tension.

25. The delegation had conceded that the Amerindian Act was outdated and in need of reform. The Committee would like to know the present status of efforts to amend it. Apparently the process of demarcation of lands belonging to Amerindian communities was going forward on the basis of colonial boundaries, with no account taken of population growth. Since the Government held residual title to all lands, she questioned whether it might then feel free to issue mining or logging permits on surrounding lands. The Committee should know what legal recourse indigenous groups might have in respect of demarcation decisions and the principles on which courts might decide such cases. According to the report, Amerindians did not effectively enjoy equal protection before the law because of inadequate translation and interpretation facilities and unawareness of their rights; the delegation should report on any steps being taken to correct the situation.

26. Mr. YALDEN said that he shared the concerns of the two previous speakers on self-determination and would welcome more information on the role of the proposed Indigenous People's Commission.

27. It would be valuable to have a copy of the Ombudsman's annual report to Parliament. If the report did not provide that information, he would also like to know the number and type of complaints submitted to the Office of the Ombudsman and the implementation of his recommendations in those cases. Noting that the Ombudsman lacked the power to enforce his findings, he was interested in knowing the proportion of cases in which the Ombudsman's recommendations had

been implemented. In addition, he would like to know whether there was any other mechanism besides the courts that could provide an effective remedy to individuals whose human rights had been violated.

28. Mr. AMOR asked for confirmation that the practice of experimentation with drugs on inmates of general or psychiatric hospitals had ceased and information on the measures taken to prevent it. He would also welcome confirmation that the Government was no longer the sole importer of newsprint and thus did not have the potential to revive indirect press censorship.

29. He noted that the Police Act provided that a person arrested without a warrant should be taken before a magistrate as soon as practicable and might be released on recognizance except where the case appeared to such member of the force to be of a serious nature. He was disturbed by the broad discretionary power given to the police by the phrases "as soon as practicable" and "of a serious nature" and wished to know whether other laws or regulations existed or were envisaged that set limits on that discretion or provided a monitoring mechanism.

30. Similarly, the Juvenile Offenders Act provided that courts need not detain a young offender in a juvenile rather than an adult facility if the young person was of "so depraved a character" that he was not fit to be so detained. A finding of depravity was a subjective matter that left the individual no recourse; the concept was inconsistent with law and human rights.

31. Lastly, he wished to have it clarified whether an expulsion order was to be signed by the President, meaning the executive authority, or the President of the High Court or other judicial body.

32. Mr. KRETZMER noted that there was some thought of amending the Public Order Act to prohibit advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constituted an incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. It would then be in keeping with article 20, paragraph 2, of the Covenant. If hate-mongering was indeed a serious problem in Guyana, he would like to have more details on the situation and was interested to learn the status of the proposed amendment.

33. Mr. LUNCHEON (Guyana) said that the country did have legislation prohibiting racial incitement, although it was not vigorously enforced. At present, the issue was being considered in relation to the new Broadcasting Act. Guyana was in the throes of a major debate on race relations. Leading personalities in the radio, television and print media often adopted positions constituting racial incitement. While recognizing the need, the Government had not moved aggressively on the matter, because the issue was highly political and also because it touched on freedom of expression.

34. Since the report covered the period from 1982 to 1987, it recorded a number of objectionable practices characteristic of the dictatorship, which had ended in 1992. He was pleased to report that control of newsprint, censorship of opposition publications and experimentation on hospital inmates without their knowledge or consent were among the practices that had disappeared.

35. He would be delighted to supply the Committee with the Ombudsman's reports, which contained information on the number and types of cases and remedies. The deficiencies of the Ombudsman Act, particularly with regard to enforcement, were recognized, and the climate was favourable to amendments. At present, enforceability was exclusively a court matter, and the approach might be to create a link. Even without final recourse to the courts, the Ombudsman's recommendations were increasingly falling on receptive ears.

36. The question of the rights of the indigenous peoples was a complicated issue, and not just in Guyana. Since 1992, the new Administration had devoted considerable attention to creating new institutions and establishing new norms and practices for a more fruitful engagement with the Amerindian peoples, but the matter was not completely resolved. With regard to mineral rights, all subsoil rights throughout the country were the property of the State by virtue of the Constitution and no Guyanese held title to them, so that there would be little political support for conferring such rights on indigenous peoples. With regard to their enjoyment of equal protection under the law, more government intervention was needed. Nevertheless, the country was proud of its efforts in preserving indigenous cultures and improving the standard of living of indigenous people.

37. Expulsion orders were signed by the executive authority, and due process in their issuance was guaranteed by law.

38. With regard to the practice of consultation, it was noteworthy that the Constitution Reform Commission, in its recommendations, had repeatedly insisted that consultation must be meaningful. The practice had been much abused under the dictatorship, but under the current Administration the understanding of consultation had grown. Constitutional thinkers had recognized the need for broader and less arbitrary inputs into the process. In the appointment of the Chancellor and Chief Justice, for example, meaningful consultation would mean broadening presidential consultation from merely the minority leader to the parliament as a whole. In relation to indigenous peoples, meaningful consultation would mean consultation down to the village level.

39. The question of the composition of the police force and its contribution to racial tension was entangled with its history under the dictatorship, when the security forces had been seen essentially as a weapon to protect the Government against the Guyanese people.

40. There was an ongoing debate in Guyana regarding retention of capital punishment in the light of the Government's obligation under the Covenant to respect the right to life. The practice of the judiciary had been to enforce the law of the country by upholding the death penalty. Nonetheless, he was confident that a deeper understanding of the right to life in the fullest sense and a respect for it and other Covenant rights would be advanced by the work of the Parliamentary Commission on Constitutional Reform to be established under the new Constitution.

41. The recommendations that had been made by the earlier Constitution Reform Commission on amendments to the Constitution, copies of which had just been circulated to the Committee, were binding recommendations, having been adopted

by Parliament. Work had begun on drafting them as provisions to be included in the new Constitution, which would be the basis on which the elections of 17 January 2001 would be held.

42. Mr. ANDO asked what percentage of the population, especially in the highland areas of Guyana, had access to computers, and consequently to the Web site of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

43. Mr. HENKIN asked to what extent the police had actually exercised their powers of arrest in cases involving violence against women; in some countries, the culture - of the police or of society at large - deterred the police from intervening and left women helpless.

44. The delegation had been candid in stating that popular sentiment supported the death penalty. While it was true that respect for the will of the people was part of human rights, he wished to underscore a common misunderstanding about the relationship between the will of the people and the protection of human rights generally. Constitutions and bills of rights were intended to protect against democracy: against legislators who adopted laws that violated human rights and even against the will of the people when it violated human rights. It would be unthinkable, for example, to accept the fact that the people wanted to exercise sovereignty by committing genocide or by discriminating against ethnic groups. The Covenant called for movement towards the abolition of the death penalty, and it was the task of Governments to educate their people to respect the Covenant and, if necessary, to disregard their wishes.

45. Mr. SCHEININ observed that it was not enough to guarantee equal subsoil rights to both the indigenous and the non-indigenous population, because indigenous peoples, whose traditional economy at the root of their culture was at stake, needed greater protection, as recognized by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 169. He asked whether any specific forms of consultation were required in Guyana and whether the prospects were for continued government ownership.

46. Ms. GAITÁN DE POMBO said that she would appreciate more information about the conditions of daily life in the Belfield Girls' School and the New Opportunity Corps for young offenders (report, para. 50), and about programmes to prevent recidivism and help young former convicts re-enter society.

47. Mr. BHAGWATI asked whether there were any restrictions on newspaper publication, such as registration; whether private schools had been abolished once education had become the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Education (report, para. 76); whether the Government still had made no provision for legal aid for the indigent; and whether the Government had taken any steps to improve the educational level of Amerindians and preserve their culture.

48. Mr. KRETZMER noted that the report had stated that there was no specific law against incitement to racial hatred, but that the delegation had spoken of such legislation. He asked for the text of the law in question.

49. Mr. LUNCHEON (Guyana) replied that computers were generally available, although less so in the hinterland, but that information carried on the human rights Web site was taken up by the media and the press for dissemination in print.

50. Under both the Criminal Law Offences Act and the Police Act, the police had the right to make arrests. Social workers and others involved in the field of domestic violence were working intensively with the police to sensitize them to human rights considerations in their use of the power of arrest.

51. He was familiar with the ILO Convention cited, but he also knew that the Constitution of Guyana had different provisions regarding justiciable rights to natural resources. Regarding the prison conditions for minors, the Belfield Girls' School had been closed and replaced by the Women's Leadership Institute, where non-governmental organizations helped to train young female offenders for their return to society. The New Opportunity Corps, a residential correctional centre for young offenders, had a large military component which was quickly being phased out in favour of civilian control. In the matter of publishing, licences were indeed required but neither the licences nor any regulations governing publications had, during the current Administration, been experienced as hindrances to freedom of publication or as a form of intimidation; also, there was easy access to print materials. Private schools did exist in Guyana and more were being established; the new Education Act clearly established the legality of their status. It was true that the laws were silent on legal aid for the indigent, although that lacuna was being addressed, because although non-governmental organizations were active in providing legal assistance, it was inadequate. The provision prohibiting incitement to racial hatred to which he had referred was a new constitutional provision and the text would subsequently be supplied to the Committee.

52. Regarding the education of Amerindians, the Government had since 1992 made a strenuous effort to raise their educational level: there were some residential secondary schools in Amerindian communities, and primary school graduates were also being brought to secondary schools in the coastal areas. Amerindians were given preference in admission to vocational and technical schools, and after graduation they generally entered the health sector and the educational sector, following in-service training.

53. Mr. KLEIN, supported by Mr. ANDO and Mr. HENKIN, asked the delegation to address the numerous questions in the list of issues that had been dealt with unsatisfactorily at the previous meeting.

54. Mr. Amor, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

55. Mr. LUNCHEON (Guyana), replying more extensively to questions discussed at the previous meeting, observed that he had already addressed the issue of the Optional Protocol and the place of the Covenant in domestic legislation. Regarding the independence of the judiciary, he drew attention to the establishment of the Caribbean Court of Appeal as another tool that would enhance it. Correcting earlier inaccuracies, he indicated that the age of retirement of puisne judges was 65, and 68 for justices of the Court of Appeal. Lay magistrates were appointed by the Judicial Service Commission.

56. Concerning the appointment of members of Parliament under the proportional representation system and the electoral list model, the Constitution allowed the leader of a list to appoint members of the list, regardless of rank, to be members of Parliament in numbers equal to the number of seats gained in the election. The written information just circulated on the constitutional reform recommendations set out the proposals for giving a greater say to voters in a given constituency.

57. With regard to detention, minors were never incarcerated with adults in Guyanese prisons, although during pre-trial detention some were housed in police stations on the coast, often for extended periods, while awaiting posting to a correctional institution for minors. There was only one correctional institution specifically for minors in Guyana, but more were being constructed. There were unfortunately delays in bringing all detainees to trial: many spent years awaiting trial after the preliminary investigation; however, as he had indicated at the previous meeting, steps were being taken to improve the situation. None, however, were held for unreasonable periods without charge, owing to the availability of writs of habeas corpus, leading either to speedy charges or release.

58. Health care was available for prisoners and they were hospitalized whenever necessary. Prison overcrowding was indeed very severe, especially in the main jail in Georgetown. He had earlier given information on arrangements for speedier transfers to prisons in the periphery and the criteria for such transfers. He had also reported on the new laws regarding non-custodial sentencing, and added that attitudes to parole were becoming more enlightened as well. Nevertheless, there was no question that the administration of justice in Guyana needed improvement.

59. No allegations of use of torture to extract information or confessions had been substantiated to his knowledge. Magistrates could resort to legal procedures such as voir dire to address the admissibility of any such evidence and such remedies were freely available.

60. There had been 20 extrajudicial killings in the past year, all of them by the security services, but the numbers had decreased over the years. He had no statistics or specific names to supply, but could describe the procedure in such cases: a standard administrative requirement had long been in place for an investigation to determine - on the basis of inquests, coroners' reports and the like - whether the use of force had been justified, and the Director of Public Prosecutions could be asked to rule on the culpability. It was a lengthy process, often lasting more than a year, because of admittedly inordinate delays at various stages. Regarding political persecutions, he was unaware of any complaints of political intimidation.

61. There was no special protection for journalists or others working in the media, who were simply covered by the general right to freedom of expression. Radio broadcasting was indeed a government monopoly; a Broadcasting Act was, however, under consideration. There were many licensed stations and newspapers operating in Guyana.

62. On the issue of women, a document had been circulated which dealt with the place and role of women in society and provided some statistics on their participation in national life. The Constitution Reform Commission had recommended that the principles set forth in article 29 of the Constitution providing for the equality of women should be made justiciable.

63. His delegation would investigate the issue of debt bondage.

64. He had already mentioned that aliens could not be expelled from Guyana's jurisdiction without due process.

65. Corporal punishment was not explicitly forbidden in Guyana, but it was not encouraged in schools.

66. On the question of ethnic relations, the establishment of the Ethnic Relations Commission, which had powers of enforcement in cases of breach of the constitutional provisions on race relations, was indicative of the efforts being made to restore ethnic health and tolerance.

67. Ms. EVATT said that many of the issues raised by members of the Committee had still not been fully addressed by the delegation.

68. The Government of Guyana seemed to concede that children under the age of 10 were sometimes detained for considerable periods of time in remand centres or elsewhere; she expressed concern about that situation.

69. With regard to torture and police brutality, members of the Committee had sought information about a number of specific cases. Moreover, the delegation had not provided the data which had been requested on the number of allegations, investigations and prosecutions. She had also asked questions about the sensitization of the police to domestic violence, the police complaints authority, and legal aid.

70. Mr. KLEIN said that some questions were still outstanding. No member of the Committee had made an allegation of systematic torture; however, the Committee had a great deal of information about specific cases of police brutality, and it needed to hear from the delegation about that issue. The delegation had provided no answer to the question about delays in bringing suspects to trial, or about the right to compensation in cases of unlawful arrest or detention. He asked how article 139, paragraph 5, of the Constitution was enforced, and whether claims could be brought against the State or only against individual police officers. He also asked whether legal representation was available during pre-trial hearings.

71. Mr. LUNCHEON (Guyana) said that the documents circulated to the Committee addressed some of the issues which had been raised.

72. Article 139, paragraph 3, of the Constitution established the right to legal representation at pre-trial hearings. If an accused person appeared before the high court or the court of appeal without legal representation, the State had to retain counsel to represent him.

73. The question of the enforceability of the legal provisions for compensation fell within the area of civil law. Compensation was not automatically paid; it was necessary to apply to the courts, which determined the amount and the conditions of compensation.

74. A writ of habeas corpus was generally filed within 72 hours. It was extremely unusual for a suspect to be held without a writ of habeas corpus. Detainees were either released, or charged within the prescribed period.

75. Statistics were not readily available on cases of torture and police brutality. There was no specific effort by the administration to collect and record such allegations.

76. With regard to legal aid, his Government supported non-governmental organizations which provided legal aid to poor and indigent people.

77. The act on the police complaints authority and the question of the sensitization of the police to domestic violence had already been covered.

78. He would try to identify specific constitutional provisions on the question of racial incitement.

79. The CHAIRPERSON expressed appreciation to the delegation of Guyana for its replies. It was regrettable that the information in the report covered only the period up to 1987, and the Committee awaited information on the current situation. Although the list of issues had been transmitted well in advance, the delegation had not really replied to the questions in it, some of which were very specific.

80. The delegation had mentioned that the recommendations of the Constitution Reform Commission were legally binding. If that was so, they were formulated in very general terms. Moreover, the very fact that they existed showed that much more still needed to be done for Guyana to be in compliance with the Covenant. That applied, for example, to the rights of persons who had been arrested, the question of pre-trial detention, and the right to compensation for victims of unlawful arrest or detention. She was surprised at the recommendation that the principles in article 29 of the Constitution should be made justiciable; that would mean that currently a whole category of people had no protection against discrimination. It was not clear whether legal aid was provided by the State or was left to non-governmental organizations. Problems subsisted with regard to article 19; for example, State monopoly of radio broadcasting could be incompatible with the Covenant. The discriminatory treatment of children born out of wedlock was a violation of the Covenant which must be resolved. She shared the concern about children waiting to be sent to correctional institutions, in violation of article 24. The delegation had said that discrimination against Amerindians was a political, rather than a legal problem; however, article 27 of the Covenant established legal obligations which all States parties must try to fulfil.

81. She wished the State party success in bringing its laws, administrative practices and culture in line with the Covenant.

82. Mr. LUNCHEON (Guyana) said that he was certain that, in its work dealing with countries at various levels of development and with various types of systems, the Committee encountered diverse manifestations of civilization. He did not feel that what had been presented over the past two meetings could in any way remove Guyana from the category of humanity striving to assume its place among the democratic institutions and organizations of the world.

83. In any consideration of the reality of Guyana, it was impossible to lose sight of the progress made since the end of the dictatorship. Guyana's participation in institutions like the United Nations and its accession to instruments like the Covenant provided an opportunity to measure itself against the standards established in the world. The meetings with the Committee provided Guyana with an opportunity to work towards the right decisions and adjustments to arrive at compliance with its obligations. However, full compliance could not be achieved overnight; Guyana's commitment would have to be measured in accordance with its national capabilities, and with the kind of support it received from the world in addressing crucial issues in national life.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.