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the Elimination
of all Forms of
Racial Discrimination**

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Sixty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1609th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 21 August 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. DIACONU

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

PREVENTION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, INCLUDING EARLY WARNING MEASURES AND URGENT ACTION PROCEDURES (agenda item 3) (continued)

Situation in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (continued) (CERD/C/63/Dec.1)

Paragraph 6 (d)

1. Mr. SHAHI said he had further revised his proposed amendment in the light of the Committee's discussion at the previous meeting. He suggested replacing paragraph 6 (d) with the following text:

“Requests the Lao authorities to urgently submit a special report containing information on the questions raised above and on the measures taken against racial discrimination.”

2. Mr. PILLAI suggested replacing the word “questions” by the word “issues”.
3. The CHAIRMAN wondered whether the decision should not specify a deadline.
4. Mr. AMIR, speaking as Country Rapporteur, said that, if no deadline was specified, the delegation would simply include the information in its next periodic report, which would not be discussed until March 2004.
5. The CHAIRMAN suggested setting a deadline of 31 November 2003.
6. Mr. SHAHI said the Secretary-General would not take action until after any deadline had passed. The idea was for the Secretary-General to take immediate action and the Committee should not tie his hands.
7. Mr. ABOUL-NASR said he did not really understand what the emergency was. The Committee was a body that examined States parties' reports, not a court trying a criminal case. It would not be able to examine a special report until March 2004 in any event.
8. The CHAIRMAN said the State party would always be free to submit a normal periodic report in the ordinary way. The Committee could not force the State party to submit a special report. Nevertheless, the Committee should call for both types of report.
9. Mr. SHAHI said that, if the Committee wished to invoke the urgent action procedure, it should do so in a consistent fashion. The reason for the urgency was that there were now only 30,000 surviving Hmong, out of 100,000, and they had been forced into the jungle and were living on leaves. That situation needed bringing to the attention of the Secretary-General, leaving it open for him to act immediately.
10. The CHAIRMAN suggested that Mr. Shahi's amendment should be inserted as a new paragraph 6 (d) and that the existing paragraph 6 (d) should become paragraph 6 (e).

11. Mr. DE GOUTTES said he felt it would not be very clear to the State party exactly what the Committee expected in requesting two reports. He suggested that the two requests should be made in the same paragraph.

12. Mr. SICILIANOS said he supported Mr. Shahi's amendment. It was fully in line with the Committee's urgent action procedure.

13. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that, if there was no objection, Committee members wished to replace paragraph 6 (d) with the paragraph proposed by Mr. Shahi, incorporating the call for the State party's next periodic report, as proposed by Mr. de Gouttes.

14. It was so decided.

Paragraph 6 (e)

15. The CHAIRMAN recalled that paragraph 6 (e) had been deleted.

Paragraphs 6 (f) and 7

16. Mr. KJAERUM proposed replacing paragraphs 6 (f) and 7 with a new paragraph 7, as follows:

“7. The Committee urges the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

(a) To draw the attention of the competent United Nations bodies, in particular the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Commission on Human Rights, to the particularly worrisome human rights situation in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and to request them to take all appropriate measures in this regard;

(b) To request competent United Nations organs to send a delegation to the Lao People's Democratic Republic, with a view to assisting the State party in honouring its obligations under international law. In this regard, the Committee draws the attention of the Secretary-General to the availability of its members to conduct such a visit in order to resume the dialogue with the State party;

(c) To request the programmes, institutions and specialized agencies of the United Nations, within their respective fields of competence, to take appropriate measures to provide humanitarian assistance, particularly with regard to food and access to medical care, to members of the Hmong population who have taken refuge in the jungle or certain mountainous regions of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.”

17. Mr. SHAHI said he did not object to the amendment in principle, but that in the specific context what was needed was to get the Secretary-General to act if he believed it was appropriate. The Secretary-General could of course refer to the General Assembly, the Security Council or any other of the bodies mentioned but that might delay matters considerably. He himself would prefer to allow the Secretary-General to exercise his discretion and act immediately if he so wished, since the situation was one of potential genocide.

18. The CHAIRMAN suggested leaving the expression “competent United Nations bodies” unspecified.

19. Mr. ABOUL-NASR said he considered that the proposed amendment ran counter to article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention.

20. The CHAIRMAN said it was in line with the urgent action procedure adopted by the Committee.

21. Mr. SHAHI said he considered the Committee was entitled to ask a State party for additional information. Furthermore, he did not subscribe to the view that the urgent action procedure should be abandoned. It was an innovative procedure that had been instituted with the support of the then Secretary-General and the Commission on Human Rights.

22. The CHAIRMAN said the amendment did not run counter to the Committee’s General Recommendation on the matter.

23. Mr. HERNDL suggested replacing the word “urges” in the first line with the word “requests”; and the word “worrisome” in subparagraph (a) with the word “disturbing”. He also suggested combining subparagraphs (a) and (b) in such a way as to make the sending of a mission one of the possible “appropriate measures” open to the Secretary-General.

24. The CHAIRMAN suggested inserting after the words “all appropriate measures in this regard”, at the end of subparagraph (a), the words “including sending a mission to the Lao People’s Democratic Republic” and continuing with the remainder of subparagraph (b). Subparagraph (b) as such would then fall.

25. Mr. HERNDL suggested replacing the words “to conduct such a visit in order to resume the dialogue with the State party” with the words “to participate in such a mission, also with a view to resuming the dialogue with the State party”.

26. Mr. PILLAI said there should be some reference to racial discrimination, otherwise the decision as a whole would look more like a Human Rights Committee decision.

27. After a discussion in which Mr. YUTZIS, Mr. PILLAI and the CHAIRMAN took part, the CHAIRMAN suggested replacing the words “honouring its obligations under international law” with the words “honouring its obligations to respect human rights and eliminate racial discrimination”.

28. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that, if there was no objection, Committee members wished to adopt Mr. Kjaerum’s amendment to paragraphs 6 (f) and 7, as amended.

29. It was so decided.

30. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that, if there was no objection, Committee members wished to adopt the decision as a whole, as amended.

31. It was so decided.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 4) (continued)

Draft concluding observations on the sixteenth and seventeenth periodic reports of the Islamic Republic of Iran (CERD/C/63/draftCO/6 (English only))

32. Mr. BOSSUYT, speaking as Country Rapporteur and introducing the draft concluding observations on the report of the Islamic Republic of Iran (CERD/C/63/draftCO/6), said he had taken account of all Committee members' suggestions and hoped he had produced balanced conclusions that reflected the discussion.

33. Mr. ABOUL-NASR said that, as was well known, a campaign was being waged against Iran. The President of the United States had referred to an "axis of evil", possibly in preparation for some action similar to that which had recently been taken in Iraq. He was positive that Mr. Bossuyt had no desire to participate in such a campaign, but, having read the draft concluding observations, he believed they went too far and were too harsh. He was not requesting special treatment for Iran - on the contrary, he was requesting that Iran be treated in the same way as all other countries.

34. Mr. BOSSUYT, speaking as Country Rapporteur, said he paid no attention whatsoever to campaigns mounted by States parties. He wished to point out that the Committee frequently noted many more concerns in concluding observations than he had raised in the draft concluding observations under consideration. In the current session, for example, the word "concern" occurred 10 times in the concluding observations on the report of the United Kingdom, whereas it occurred only 6 times in the conclusions on the report of Iran.

Paragraphs 1 to 7

35. Paragraphs 1 to 7 were adopted.

36. Mr. PILLAI said there was one more positive aspect which could be added. Referring to paragraph 11 of the concluding observations, in the opening sentence of the first subparagraph, he suggested that the word "while" be deleted and that the passage beginning with "the Committee takes note with satisfaction" and ending with "acts of, racial discrimination" should be removed from paragraph 11 and added after paragraph 7.

37. The CHAIRMAN agreed and suggested that the sentence quoted by Mr. Pillai be deleted from paragraph 11 and inserted following paragraph 7 as a new paragraph 7 (b) under positive aspects.

38. It was so decided.

Paragraph 8

39. Mr. BOSSUYT (Country Rapporteur) said that at the end of the first subparagraph, the words "but remains concerned that such information has not been provided in the State party's report" should be deleted and replaced with "but it would appreciate receiving such information in the next report".

40. Mr. SHAHI, noting that the second subparagraph of paragraph 8 requested information on all ethnic groups, said it was important to acknowledge that the delegation had provided information on the provinces where minority groups were concentrated. Although more information was desirable, the information provided was sufficient to make a rough calculation of the size of the minority population. Therefore, in the first subparagraph, he would likewise delete the words “but remains concerned that such information has not been provided in the State party’s report” and would replace them with “and also notes the information provided about the concentration of ethnic majorities in the different provinces of Iran”.

41. Mr. SICILIANOS said it would be preferable to refer to “ethnic groups” rather than “ethnic majorities” in order to avoid confusion.

42. Mr. BOSSUYT, supported by the CHAIRMAN, accepted Mr. Shahi’s amendment and suggested that the word “Nevertheless” be added at the beginning of the second subparagraph.

43. Paragraph 8, as amended, was adopted.

Paragraph 9

44. The CHAIRMAN, supported by Mr. VALENCIA RODRIGUEZ and Mr. THIAM, said that the third sentence of the first subparagraph should be deleted; issues of torture and discrimination against women were best dealt with by the committees concerned.

45. Mr. VALENCIA RODRIGUEZ, supported by Mr. ABOUL-NASR, said that the second sentence of the first subparagraph should also be deleted, since Iran was not the only country in which the Convention had never been invoked in domestic courts.

46. Mr. BOSSUYT (Country Rapporteur) said that although he would not oppose deleting the second sentence of the first subparagraph, he wished to point out that the Committee had made similar statements with regard to other reports. Turning to the third sentence of the first subparagraph, he felt it important to note the important role played by the Council of Guardians with regard to international instruments, including the Convention, and their eventual implementation in the State party. He also recalled that the Committee had on previous occasions referred to other conventions in its concluding observations.

47. Mr. THIAM, with regard to the second sentence of the first subparagraph, said that in other concluding observations the Committee had encouraged States parties to invoke the Convention before the courts, instead of expressing a concern. He could not support the current text, which should be deleted.

48. Mr. SHAHI agreed that the second and third sentences of the first subparagraph should be deleted. Furthermore, in the second subparagraph, the words “and the role of the Guardian Council in this matter” should be deleted. The Committee was requesting more information on the legal status of the Convention and issues relating specifically to the Council of Guardians could be raised once that information had been provided.

49. The CHAIRMAN suggested that an acceptable compromise might be to delete the words “with concern” in the second sentence of the first subparagraph; the third sentence would also be deleted. In the second subparagraph, as suggested by Mr. Shahi, the words “and the role of the Guardian Council in this matter” would be deleted.

50. It was so decided.

Paragraph 10

51. Mr. SHAHI wondered if the Committee often expressed concerns regarding adoption of the definition of racial discrimination as contained in article 1, paragraph 1 of the Convention.

52. The CHAIRMAN supported the current wording of the text on the grounds that article 1 was a key article of the Convention, in which racial discrimination was defined.

53. Mr. ABOUL-NASR suggested deleting the second subparagraph; few States parties had constitutions which contained definitions identical to those in the Convention.

54. The CHAIRMAN, supported by Mr. BOSSUYT (Country Rapporteur), Mr. de GOUTTES and Mr. THORNBERRY, suggested that in the second subparagraph, the words “the Constitution” could simply be deleted and replaced with “its domestic law”.

55. It was so decided.

Paragraph 11

56. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the opening part of the first subparagraph had been transferred to positive aspects as a new paragraph 7 (b); the current text therefore began “It observes”.

57. Mr. VALENCIA RODRIGUEZ, supported by Mr. ABOUL-NASR, Mr. SHAHI and Mr. THIAM, said that the second sentence of the first subparagraph, referring to the 1985 Press Law, was too political in nature and should be deleted. Furthermore, in the second subparagraph, since the article of the Convention in question was article 4 (b), the reference to “article 5” should be deleted.

58. Mr. de GOUTTES understood the concerns expressed by Mr. Valencia Rodriguez and other Committee members with regard to the second sentence of the first subparagraph, but felt it was important to obtain information regarding the use of the 1985 Press Law. A compromise solution might be to insert the words “at allegations” following the words “is concerned”.

59. Mr. SICILIANOS, supported by MR. YUTZIS, said that it would be sufficient simply to note that the 1985 Press Law had not yet been invoked to combat racial discrimination.

60. Mr. PILLAI, supported by Mr. SHAHI, said that the State party itself had mentioned the Press Law in its report in the context of article 4; it was therefore perfectly appropriate for the Committee to request information on application of that law in the context of racial

discrimination. He suggested that the current second sentence of the first subparagraph should be deleted and replaced with “The Committee notes the information furnished by the State party on the Press Law with regard to article 4 of the Convention and requests the State party to provide information in its next report on the application of that law to combat racial discrimination”.

61. Mr. SHAHI, with regard to the third sentence, wondered whether the Committee usually expressed concerns with regard to use of article 4 (b) of the Convention and the right to freedom of expression as an excuse not to ban racist organizations; if not, the third sentence should be deleted.

62. The CHAIRMAN said the Committee had often expressed such concerns and had for example done so with regard to the United Kingdom.

63. Mr. THORNBERRY suggested that another possible wording for the second sentence regarding the Press Law would be “The Committee would welcome information on the application of the 1985 Press Law in combating racial discrimination.”

64. Ms. JANUARY-BARDILL pointed out that the 1985 Press Law was not the only legislation which the State party had referred to in the context of article 4; the Committee should make it clear whether it was referring only to the Press Law.

65. Mr. BOSSUYT (County Rapporteur) noted that the periodic report referred to the 1985 Press “Act” (CERD/C/431/Add.6, para. 48) and the Committee should perhaps use the same expression. With regard to the final text of paragraph 11, the opening sentence of the first subparagraph should be deleted and replaced with “The Committee observes that no information has been made available on the effective enforcement of the legislation concerning eradication of the incitement to or acts of racial discrimination.” The second sentence of the first subparagraph should read as suggested by Mr. Pillai. The third sentence of the first subparagraph would be retained. The second subparagraph would be deleted.

66. It was so decided.

Paragraph 12

67. Mr. ABOUL-NASR proposed that the word “delegation” in the opening sentence should be replaced by “State party” and that the Committee’s expression of concern about the lack of sufficient information should be deleted.

68. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the amended text should read as follows:

“While the Committee notes that, according to the State party, the teaching of minority languages and literature in schools is permitted, it requests that the State party include more information in its next periodic report concerning the measures it has adopted to enable persons belonging to minorities to have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue and to have it used as a medium of instruction.”

69. Paragraph 12, as amended, was adopted.

Paragraph 13

70. Mr. ABOUL-NASR said that the Committee's expression of satisfaction in the second sentence of the paragraph should be deleted. He was opposed, moreover, to the emphasis that had been placed on religious discrimination in the draft text.
71. Mr. BOSSUYT (Country Rapporteur) said that the issue of the Baha'i community in Iran was a sensitive one and he had taken great pains to achieve a balance in the draft text. He wished to point out that article 5 of the Convention included freedom of religion among the civil rights that States parties were required to protect.
72. Mr. KJAERUM agreed that the draft text was balanced. The element of religious discrimination had been mentioned only insofar as it intersected with racial discrimination.
73. Mr. de GOUTTES said that there was an undeniable link between religious faith and ethnic identity and the Committee had dwelt at length on the "intersectionality" of the two issues during its consideration of the report. The Committee's conclusions should therefore be reflected in its concluding observations.
74. Mr. ABOUL-NASR said that it had not been demonstrated that the Baha'is were a racially distinct minority.
75. Mr. SHAHI said that the question of "intersectionality" did not arise in the case of the Baha'is, since that community was not distinguishable by race. The issue of religious discrimination should be left to the appropriate human rights treaty body.
76. Ms. JANUARY-BARDILL said that she disagreed with the view just expressed by Mr. Shahi. She could not accept that for, purely technical reasons, the human situation of a community of over 300,000 people could not be discussed. In her view, the paragraph should be retained as currently drafted.
77. Mr. LINDGREN ALVES said that the Committee had an obligation to call attention to situations that were disturbing. Religion was one of the main elements of ethnicity and was therefore a proper subject for the Committee's consideration. In his view, the paragraph was well balanced and should be left in its current form.
78. Mr. THIAM said that the core issue was whether or not the Baha'i community constituted an ethnic group. If it did not, then the paragraph should be deleted. He also wished to caution against the temptation to standardize the concept of the "intersectionality" of religious and racial discrimination issues.
79. Mr. LINDGREN ALVES said that it was important for the Committee to take a decision on the matter at its current session. He wished to propose the insertion of the words "Taking into consideration the linkages that tend to exist between religion and ethnic discrimination" at the beginning of the first subparagraph and to delete the first sentence of the second subparagraph.
80. Mr. BOSSUYT (Country Rapporteur) said that he would support the drafting proposals just made by Mr. Lindgren Alves. He wished to remind members, however, that the paragraph

under consideration was not about the Baha'i faith as such but about a large number of other minority groups. The Committee should not be distracted by the single reference in the draft text to the Baha'i faith, particularly since that reference was a positive one. The concept of "intersectionality" was merely a recognition of the overlap between religion and ethnicity.

81. Mr. YUTZIS, speaking on a point of order, proposed that the discussion be brought to an end until a written text of the new formulation proposed by Mr. Lindgren Alves was available.

82. It was so decided.

Paragraph 14

83. Paragraph 14 was adopted.

Paragraph 15

84. Mr. SHAHI asked whether the wording used in the second sentence of the first subparagraph was a standard formulation. If not, it should be brought into line with the standard formulation.

85. Mr. BOSSUYT (Country Rapporteur) said that the proposed wording had been used in previous concluding observations of the Committee.

86. Mr. de GOUTTES proposed that the wording that had been used in the second subparagraph of paragraph 26 of the Committee's concluding observations on the report of Albania should be substituted for the current wording in paragraph 15.

87. Mr. SHAHI said that he accepted Mr. de Gouttes' proposal. The Committee should observe the same standards for all States parties and nuances should not be introduced into its concluding observations for political reasons.

88. Mr. KJAERUM said that the secretariat of the Committee should formulate a standard text for use in similar situations.

89. The CHAIRMAN said that the wording used in the concluding observations on the report of Albania would now become standard.

90. Paragraph 15, as amended, was adopted.

Paragraphs 16 to 21

91. Paragraphs 16 to 21 were adopted.

92. Mr. HERNDL said that he wished to sound a note of caution with regard to the use of standardized texts in the Committee's concluding observations. The wording used in the concluding observations on the report of Albania had been tailored to that specific case. The circumstances in each State party were different and the Committee's observations must reflect that specificity.

93. Mr. de GOUTTES said that he shared the concern just expressed by Mr. Herndl about the possible abuse of standard formulas.

94. Mr. BOSSUYT (Country Rapporteur) warned that the more the Committee's concluding observations were standardized the less credible and useful they would become.

95. Mr. THORNBERRY said that members should not forget the principle of equality in their treatment of the reports of States parties. Similar situations must be treated in the same manner.

Paragraph 13 (continued)

96. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of the Committee to Mr Lindgren Alves' proposed draft for paragraph 13, which had been distributed as requested and which read as follows:

“Taking into consideration the linkages that tend to exist between religion and ethnic discrimination, the Committee takes note with concern of the reported discrimination faced by non-Shi'ite groups who are deprived of certain rights, and that certain provisions of the State party's legislation appeared to be discriminatory on both ethnic and religious grounds. In this respect, while the Committee notes with satisfaction some positive developments such as the authorization for members of the Baha'i faith to register their marriages, it regrets the persistence of other limitations, such as the preclusion of members of non-recognized faiths from registering in universities.

The Committee recommends that the State party permit students of different origins to register in universities without being compelled to identify their religion. Furthermore, the Committee invites the State party to submit additional information on the mandate and functions of the Special National Committee for the Promotion of the Rights of Religious Minorities.”

97. He invited the Committee to comment on the wording.

98. Mr. SHAHI said that he had no objection to the second subparagraph but could not accept the first subparagraph, since it failed to take into account the special circumstances prevailing in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

99. Mr. THIAM and Mr. ABOUL-NASR said they found the new wording unacceptable because it drew too close a link between religion and ethnic or racial discrimination.

100. Mr. LINDGREN ALVES said that he would not want the reference to discrimination against members of the Baha'i faith to be used as a pretext for the international community or any given State to take action against Iran. He wished to reject accusations that he or other members of the Committee had failed to condemn acts of discrimination against Muslims in other countries. Since his compromise text had failed to achieve a consensus within the Committee, he suggested that a vote be taken. Alternatively, no recommendations should be issued to the Islamic Republic of Iran at all.

101. Mr. BOSSUYT (Country Rapporteur) suggested that the words “tend to” in the first sentence should be replaced by the word “may”.

102. Mr. THIAM said that such a minor amendment would not be enough to change his mind.

103. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the first sentence should be amended to read as follows:

“The Committee takes note with concern of the reported discrimination faced by some ethnic groups and foreigners on both ethnic and religious grounds.”

104. Mr. BOSSUYT (Country Rapporteur) said that he would oppose the deletion of the first clause.

105. Mr. SHAHI, while commending Mr. Lindgren Alves on his attempt to reach a compromise on such a difficult issue, said that ethnic groups and foreigners could not be addressed together. He repeated his assertion that the Baha’i community could not be distinguished as a separate ethnic group.

106. Ms. JANUARY-BARDILL, supported by Mr. ABOUL-NASR, suggested that the first subparagraph was too specific, with its references to particular groups. She felt that it should be reworded accordingly.

107. Mr. BOSSUYT (Country Rapporteur) and Mr. ABOUL-NASR proposed that the different suggestions should be put to the vote.

108. Mr. LINDGREN ALVES, speaking on a point of order, said that he had already suggested that his wording of the paragraph be put to the vote.

109. The CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that votes were not usually taken on matters of such importance. The Government of the State party might, in the future, exploit such an explicit demonstration of divisions within the Committee.

110. Mr. SHAHI said that he agreed the issue was of paramount importance. It might affect other States parties in the future. In view of the Committee’s inability to reach a consensus, he suggested that consultations should be held and that discussion of the issue be resumed in the afternoon.

111. It was so decided.

Draft concluding observations on the fourth and fifth periodic reports of Latvia (CERD/C/63/DraftCO/8)

112. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider the document paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 8

113. Paragraphs 1 to 8 were adopted.

Paragraph 9

114. The CHAIRMAN suggested deleting the word “potentially” in the third sentence.

115. Paragraph 9, as amended, was adopted.

Paragraph 10

116. Mr. AVTONOMOV suggested a reference be made to law enforcement measures or implementation in addition to the “legislation of the State party”.

117. Mr. KJAERUM (Country Rapporteur) pointed out that paragraph 10 was intended to focus on legislation while paragraph 11 referred to its implementation.

118. Paragraph 10 was adopted.

Paragraph 11

119. Mr. HERNDL, emphasizing the importance of standardization, asked whether the wording used for Albania, with necessary additions or subtractions, might not be appropriate.

120. Mr. KJAERUM (Country Rapporteur) said that he preferred the wording as it stood.

121. Mr. AMIR, speaking on a point of order, said that the reference to the “lack of will” in the first subparagraph seemed to be a value judgement, since no proof was given.

122. The CHAIRMAN, reminding Mr. Amir of what had been decided with regard to Albania, said that the subparagraph in question made no value judgement but merely suggested the reasons why a low number of cases had been initiated under article 4.

123. Paragraph 11 was adopted.

Paragraph 12

124. Mr. VALENCIA RODRIGUEZ, supported by Mr. ABOUL-NASR, said that the reference to Latvia’s imminent accession to the European Union was out of context.

125. The CHAIRMAN suggested the following wording:

“The Committee recognizes that political rights can be legitimately confined to citizens. Nevertheless, noting that most non-citizens have been residing in Latvia for many years, if not for their whole life, the Committee strongly recommends that the State party consider facilitating the integration process by making it possible to participate in local elections for all those non-citizens who are long-term permanent residents.”

126. Mr. KJAERUM (Country Rapporteur) said that, although he believed that Latvia’s imminent accession to the European Union was relevant, he had no objection to the Chairman’s suggestion.

127. Paragraph 12, as amended, was adopted.

Paragraph 13

128. Mr. AVTONOMOV suggested that the words “the positive” before “measures” in the first sentence, should be deleted.

129. Paragraph 13, as amended, was adopted.

Paragraphs 14 and 15

130. Paragraphs 14 and 15 were adopted.

Paragraph 16

131. Mr. AVTONOMOV said that he preferred the earlier version of the text, in which the right to receive instruction in one’s own language was made explicit.

132. Mr. BOSSUYT pointed out the difficulty in increasingly multi-ethnic societies of providing education in the language of every child.

133. The CHAIRMAN said that the earlier version had not gone that far but had called on the State party to respect the rights of certain minorities to receive instruction in their language.

134. Mr. THIAM said that he agreed with Mr. Bossuyt’s point but also accepted the Chairman’s explanations.

135. Mr. SICILIANOS said that he preferred the new version of the text.

136. Mr. AVTONOMOV said that he would not insist.

137. Paragraph 16 was adopted.

Paragraphs 17 to 25

138. Paragraphs 17 to 25 were adopted.

Paragraph 26

139. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the words “seventh periodic report” should be replaced by the words “seventh and eighth periodic reports” and that the date should read “14 May 2007”.

140. Paragraph 26, as amended, was adopted.

141. The draft concluding observations on the fourth and fifth periodic reports of Latvia as a whole, as amended, were adopted.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.