



**International Convention on  
the Elimination  
of all Forms of  
Racial Discrimination**

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Sixty-sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1673rd MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,  
on Monday, 21 February 2005, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. YUTZIS

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

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

Sixth to fifteenth periodic reports of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (CERD/C/451/Add.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, the members of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic took places at the Committee table.
2. Mr. KIETTISACK (Lao People's Democratic Republic), introducing the combined sixth to fifteenth periodic reports submitted by his country (CERD/C/451/Add.1), said that his Government's reporting backlog had been due to inadequate human and financial resources, not to any lack of political will. It had experienced similar difficulties in fulfilling its reporting obligations with respect to other human rights treaties, and it was only thanks to bilateral and multilateral cooperation that it had at last been able to submit the present report.
3. The written questions that the delegation had received from members of the Committee could be placed in four main categories: legal questions; false political allegations made against the Lao People's Democratic Republic; the Government's strategies for socio-economic development; and the classification of ethnic groups.
4. His Government was considering the matter of the hierarchical status of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, as neither the Constitution nor existing legislation provided guidance. Understanding of the term "racial discrimination", in the absence of any legal definition, was provided by articles 8, 35 and 37 of the Constitution and by article 8 of the Criminal Code; the Government was, however, working to ensure that there would in future be a clear definition of the term. Lao citizens were able to invoke articles 8 and 35 of the Constitution before the courts. The newly amended Code of Criminal Procedure made provision for individuals to address complaints to the police in order to secure enforcement of their rights. Article 35 of the Constitution established the right to form an association on condition that the association's aims were in conformity with the law.
5. He was unable to provide examples of cases involving racial discrimination as there had been no such cases. However, discrimination on grounds of religion did occur; in particular, he noted the difficulties posed by the arrival of members of certain religious groups offering charitable assistance that was conditional on adherence to certain religious mores or was available only to members of a specific religious group. Those practices were contrary to article 60 of the Criminal Code.
6. Mr. KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that he would respond to the questions which, in his delegation's view, concerned politically-motivated allegations against his country. The attacks on members of an ethnic minority about which the Committee had expressed concern had been carried out by bandits: the fact that all the victims had been robbed made it clear that the motivation for the attacks had been robbery. Moreover, it was illogical to

conclude that the killings had been racially motivated, since there had been members of the Hmong minority among the perpetrators, and members of the Lao Lum majority among the victims. With the aim of combating such crimes, the Government had increased patrols and urged people to remain vigilant and to play a part in the huge task of ensuring public order and security. There was no armed resistance force in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

7. The allegation concerning the killing of five Hmong children in May 2003 was one of many that had been made unjustly against the Government with the aim of discrediting the country's image. All such allegations had been investigated and found to be false. Investigation of the case in question had concluded that no such incident had occurred: analysis of a videotape that had been submitted to the Government had revealed many inconsistencies and provided no clue as to when or where the alleged killing might have occurred. No complaints had been filed. Since ethnic Hmong held high-ranking positions in both the military and the administration, no complaint would have escaped their attention.

8. The foreign nationals Thierry Falise and Vincent Reynaud had entered the country as tourists, not as journalists. They had held a secret meeting with bandits who had killed a security officer when he had approached them. The two tourists, who had subsequently claimed to be journalists, had been arrested as accomplices to the crime, but had been released as a mark of the Lao Government's friendship and good relations with their national Government. Thao Moua and Pa Phue Khang, the ostensible journalists' Lao assistants, were in prison because they were still considered to have been accomplices to the killing.

9. Mr. KHOUSAKOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that since 1996 his Government had pursued a national development agenda designed to rid the country of its "least developed" status by 2020. Eight national priorities had been identified, as well as specific poverty-reduction targets. Industrialization and modernization priorities featured in the Fifth Five-Year Plan. Government guidelines stressed the need for social and economic development to be pursued in a balanced way and to be based on sound economic management and the strengthening of institutions. The implementation of the Fifth Plan had produced positive results: greater attention had been paid to groups living in isolated areas, especially women; more schools had been built, including boarding schools for ethnic students who lived in remote areas; basic health infrastructure had been installed in remote areas, so that almost every district had a dispensary and a hospital; some diseases, such as polio, had been entirely eradicated; 56 per cent of children had benefited from the expanded immunization programme; and 65 per cent of people living in remote areas now had access to improved drinking water installations. The Government was aware that much remained to be done if it was to achieve its goal by 2020, but it was confident that its donor partners would continue to support its national development agenda.

10. Mr. SAYKANYA (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the ethnic peoples in his country had been reclassified into 49 categories. During the national revolution, the population had been classified into three nationalities, which had in turn been subclassified into 68 ethnic groups. Those classifications had been politically motivated, with the intention of uniting the country during the revolution. The reclassification had been necessary in order to ensure that the needs of every ethnic group were adequately taken into account in government programmes and that respect for the rights of all groups could be achieved.

11. Children of all ethnic groups had the right to public education from the age of 6 in their communities. There were 13 boarding schools in the country, 2 of which were under the supervision of the central Government, the remainder being under the provincial governments. The location of the boarding schools in urban areas gave children opportunities to develop their personalities; exposing children to new living and learning environments did not mean forcing them to abandon their traditional and cultural identities. In addition, children were able to learn from each other about each other's cultures, which served to enhance national solidarity. Moreover, children were able to go on to further education and subsequently return home to put the skills they had acquired to use in their communities.

12. Regarding the issue of racial prejudice and hatred, the information received by the Committee might have been true under the former regime, but under the new regime the Government had focused on the elimination of the ethnic peoples' negative perceptions of one another. The negative traditions and practices which the ethnic peoples had been persuaded to abandon included belief in superstition, the idea that twin babies were bad for the family and community, and forced marriage.

13. Mr. AMIR (Country Rapporteur) thanked the delegation for its observations. He drew the Committee's attention to a number of facts concerning the reporting country's colonial history, geographical location and features, economic development, poverty and relative isolation. It was clear that the country was making the transition to the globalization of international relations. Trade and financial agreements were being concluded with neighbouring countries and international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the European Union and the Association of South-East Asian Nations. However, the evolution of the situation of women and children, particularly within minorities, had not kept pace with changes in the economic area. He would be interested to hear the delegation's comments on the issues of prostitution and sexual tourism, and particularly on the concerns raised by the Special Rapporteur regarding the sale of children and child prostitution.

14. The work of the Regional Seminar on Minority Rights: Cultural Diversity and Development in South-East Asia, held in Chiang Mai in 2002, and Mr. Vatthana Pholsena of the University of Singapore had provided clarification of the role of the law and the significance to be attached to the allegations concerning the situation of the Hmong ethnic group, which had been a constant source of concern for the international community since 1975. He would welcome clarification concerning those allegations, particularly as the issue had not been touched on in the report. That would suggest that the problem did not exist, a situation he would welcome.

15. He had noted that the Lao term "son'phaw", meaning "ethnic people", was used in official documents and the Constitution, rather than the term "ethnic minorities". Implicitly, the term "ethnic people" referred to all those who were not of Lao ethnicity, although the ethnic Lao were also officially identified as an ethnic group in the national census. The term "indigenous people" was not recognized by the Lao Government, the implication being that it could only be applied to people of Lao ethnic origin. However, institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank continued to use the term. He would welcome clarification of that situation.

16. According to an International Labour Organization (ILO) document, there were more than 200 distinct ethnic groups in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Conventionally, the population had been divided into 67 ethnic groups within three broad categories, each corresponding to an ethno-linguistic family, namely: Tai-Kadai; Austro-Asian, divided into Mon-Khmer and Viet-Muong; Sino-Tibetan. The remainder of the population were made up of people of Vietnamese or Chinese origin. However, the most recent census had identified 49 ethnic groups, divided into four categories: Lao-Tai, Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Iumian and Tibeto-Chinese, with the ethnic Lao population making up 52 per cent of the total population. Classification was a complex and sensitive issue, as it constituted a multicultural and multi-ethnic recomposition of the country, where the Republic had been created with the objective of national development on a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multid denominational basis. He would be interested to hear the delegation's comments on those issues.

17. Recent migratory movements were characterized by the Government's wish to settle villagers from the highlands in lowland regions, in response to the conflict between the ancient rural cultures and the State's interest in forestry resources. What was the current situation with regard to the integration of cultural minorities into the national culture through development?

18. According to the 1995 census, 23 per cent of ethnic Lao, 34 per cent of the Phu Thay, 56 per cent of the Khmu, 67 per cent of the Hmong, and 94 and 96 per cent respectively of the Akha and the Lattu had never attended school. According to the delegation's official figures, only 50 per cent of the total population spoke Lao as a first language; that indicated that the other half had never read the documents published in Lao which dealt with the interests of minorities. The difficulty of determining access to development and equity on the basis of ethnicity must be addressed.

19. Since numerous ethnic minority populations lived in isolated mountainous regions, it might be considered that they had had reduced access to school simply for reasons of geographical isolation; but reduced access was also due to the fact that their children would rather work with and for their families to grow food for subsistence purposes.

20. The customs of minorities were often perceived as primitive or ignorant, as a result of which those minorities were subject to discrimination, embodied in the absence of schools, hospitals, courts, decent housing and other rights recognized by the Convention. The rural population could not accede to those sectors simply because teachers, civil servants and others were not familiar with the minority languages. On the other hand, the ethnic minorities had difficulties in adapting and understanding Lao technical skills. Knowledge of the Lao language, in addition to the language of origin, should therefore be developed in all areas of the country in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination.

21. Regarding the efforts to use equipment specifically designed to overcome the linguistic problems of many ethnic groups, that equipment was only used in the formal education system, and not where it was needed most, i.e. in training programmes for a variety of development needs. Such an approach to linguistic issues had merely increased the alienation of minority groups.

22. He recalled that in 1996, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Lao National Commission for UNESCO and the Lao Minister of Information and Culture had met in the capital, Vientiane, and affirmed that the policy for the preservation of the country's multi-ethnic heritage aimed to establish a reservoir of knowledge, and that the members of ethnic groups, particularly the young, could and should choose between a single culture or multiple cultures, decide for themselves on the future of their traditions, and hence constitute an intangible source of richness for the country. The Lao language was not only an instrument in reinforcing that richness, but a prerequisite as a subject of law.

23. With regard to the implementation of articles 2 to 7 of the Convention, the report did not indicate the legal, legislative and judicial steps which had been taken to prohibit and punish the various forms of discrimination noted. No information had been provided on measures taken to guarantee the cultural, linguistic and religious rights of minorities, on the situation of refugees who had fled to neighbouring countries, or on provisions to facilitate their repatriation on a non-discriminatory basis in which their basic rights were not denied.

24. Regarding article 6 and legal guarantees, he would like to know whether the laws referred to in the report could be invoked in the courts in the context of complaints by injured parties. As to article 7, it would have been useful to include proposed measures to publicize the Convention and the Committee's conclusions and to initiate sustained cooperation with NGOs.

25. The statutes of the nationalities committee and the plans of action of the Lao Front for Nation-Building were available only in the Lao language. With regard to article 4, there were no provisions declaring that the dissemination of ideas based on racial hatred was punishable by law.

26. Although the Constitution provided that the State should pursue a policy that fostered unity and equality between all ethnic groups (art. 8), and that all citizens, irrespective of sex, social status, education, religion or ethnic group, were equal before the law (arts. 22 and 35), the provisions of the Convention which underlay those articles had not been fully put into effect. The enactment of specific legislation incorporating the provisions of article 4 and article 5 (c) and (d) (i)-(iii) of the Convention was not yet envisaged.

27. It should thus be pointed out that the Constitution did not use the ethno-cultural roots of the Lao people as the cement of national unity, on the basis of which effective and equitable participation in the central legislative, judicial and administrative powers would eliminate any form of discrimination against any ethnic group.

28. Although considerable progress had been made in the civil and criminal domains, and paragraphs 38-40 of the report referred to non-discrimination clauses, the law on freedom of residence and movement within the State borders, cited in paragraph 44, did not appear to contain clear provisions relating to non-discrimination. Regarding freedom to leave the country, a visa issued by the competent authorities was still necessary, contrary to article 5 of the Convention. The right to nationality was linked to "other criteria as determined by this (Nationality) Act", which should be clarified. The fact that all forms of discrimination had been eliminated from the right to marriage constituted real progress.

29. However, the right to own property of the national community was subject to the State's full and absolute right to ownership. The State guaranteed the rights of use, transfer and inheritance, but it was also stipulated that ownership was the full and absolute right of the State, the community and the individual. That point needed clarification.

30. Regarding article 6, conflicts between ethnic groups were, according to the report, dealt with by reaching amicable settlements at the local level in coordination with the relevant local administrative authority, and no cases of ethnic or racial discrimination had been brought before the courts. He wondered why the Convention was not implemented in parallel with the customs of the ethnic groups living in the most remote areas of the country.

31. As to article 7, the Government was not in a position to introduce into the education curriculum the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the international human rights instruments. In addition, all the media were owned or controlled by the State. He recalled also that the reporting country had not yet signed a number of major international treaties, including the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and the optional protocols to a number of other treaties.

32. He asked what the consequences of ethno-cultural, legal, economic, political and social evaluation had been for the Hmong people. The Committee had been informed about allegations of torture, poor prison conditions, religious intolerance, restrictions on freedom of expression, arbitrary detention, forced displacement of inhabitants from mountain villages and the detention of Hmong people in rehabilitation camps. He asked whether such allegations were true, and what specific measures the Government was taking to prevent discriminatory practices and establish national unity. Further information should be given on measures to improve the situation of the Hmong people, including specific details of the contents of the Government's policy for their protection.

33. Mr. VALENCIA RODRÍGUEZ, welcoming the renewal of the dialogue between the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Committee, reminded the delegation that the Government could avail itself of the advisory services of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) if it needed assistance in drafting future periodic reports. The fact that poverty was widespread in the State party meant that enjoyment of many human rights was limited; urgent measures should be taken to rectify that situation. He asked how the legal instruments listed in paragraph 8 of the report protected the population against racial discrimination.

34. The delegation should clarify the inconsistencies in the report, which stated that there was "no discrimination between the various ethnic groups" (para. 9) yet at the same time acknowledged that there were profound differences between those groups, who often lived in extreme poverty. He asked what results had been obtained or were expected from the policy on national unity mentioned in paragraphs 12 and 13 of the report, and whether the National Assembly had adopted the Government's eight-point national priorities programme.

The Government's efforts to improve public health services were commendable and must be encouraged and developed. He wished to know whether the Government's programmes to combat poverty through reducing illiteracy, disease and unemployment had been successful, and how they had affected the country's macroeconomic indicators.

35. The Criminal Code did not refer specifically to violence or incitement to violence motivated by race or ethnicity, and should be amended accordingly in order to comply fully with article 4 (b) of the Convention. Further information on ethnic representation in the Government and other State bodies should be provided. He wished to know whether Buddhism was the official religion, and how followers of other religions were guaranteed the freedom to practise their faith. He wondered whether foreign workers' rights were guaranteed by contracts, whether there were any legal norms in place to ensure protection of their right to work and whether they were permitted to join Lao trade unions.

36. The Government's efforts to improve living conditions were positive, but further measures should be taken to improve housing, medical assistance, social security and education for disadvantaged ethnic groups. Steps must also be taken to strengthen mediation procedures in discrimination cases, and to ensure recourse to tribunals in the event that an amicable solution could not be reached.

37. The Committee was concerned that it had not received the information requested in its decision 1 (63) of 21 August 2003 (CERD/C/63/Dec.1), concerning allegations of economic, social and cultural discrimination against the Hmong people and acts of extreme violence by Lao armed forces against the inhabitants of remote villages in certain provinces. The information requested in that decision must be provided.

38. Mr. TANG Chengyuan said the new laws that the Government had enacted during the difficult transitional period should be commended. He asked what the main reasons were for ethnic inequality, and what problems such inequality caused. The Committee had been informed about violations of the rights of the Hmong people in mountain villages by groups of bandits who were rebelling against the Government. Information should be provided on those groups, including their numbers, what measures were being taken to control them and what efforts were being made to bring human rights offenders to justice. The Government should take long-term measures to establish unity and win the hearts and minds of rebel groups in order to achieve durable peace.

39. Mr. KJAERUM said that the Committee was concerned about the negative effects of relocating ethnic groups and indigenous peoples from mountain villages to lowland areas. Although the reasons for such relocations had been explained, the circumstances in which they took place were still unclear. He asked whether relocation was carried out with the informed consent of those involved, whether the Government had provided adequate compensation to the ethnic groups affected and, if so, what that compensation had consisted of, what legal protection was provided for the right of indigenous groups to own and control land, and what legal remedies were available to them in the event of disputes over land rights.



40. Regarding double discrimination against women members of minorities, he asked whether there had been any court cases or decisions on trafficking, and how police officers and officials were trained to be aware of the vulnerability of minority women and girls as potential trafficking victims. He wished to know why minority girls were underrepresented in the education system, even at the primary level, and what measures were being taken to remedy that problem. The report stated that the legal marriageable age was 18, “except in special, unavoidable cases”, in which it could be lowered. He asked what those cases were, and whether any attempts were being made to prevent forced marriages.

41. He enquired whether official investigations were being carried out into the murder of five Hmong children and the rapes and beatings of Hmong people by the Lao armed forces. The Committee had received reports of Hmong rebels surrendering to the Lao Government and he wondered how they were being treated. He asked whether the Government had any plans to establish a national human rights institution to monitor human rights compliance and carry out awareness-raising and educational activities. Had any civil society organizations been established to allow open public discussion on discrimination and other human rights issues?

42. Mr. de GOUTTES said that the Committee was concerned about the effects of poverty in rural areas in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, especially on ethnic minorities such as the Hmong. He wished to know what were the criteria for changing the nomenclature of the Lao linguistic families, and whether or the ethnic implications of that change had been taken into account. He asked what had been the impact of relocation on the way of life and enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights of the groups that had been moved from mountain villages. All ethnic groups should be represented in State bodies and in the National Assembly, and he wondered what the criteria were for such representation.

43. The delegation should explain what methods were being used to “teach the multi-ethnic population to leave behind outdated customs and ways of life” (CERD/C/451/Add.1, para. 73). Further information should also be provided as to why the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments could not be included in the national education curriculum. He asked what punishments were imposed for religious practices that were considered to be hostile to the State regime or revealed State secrets, and requested a statistical breakdown of the population by religion. According to the report, part of the country was still under a regime of animism; he wished to know what efforts were being made to address that issue.

44. He supported the observation made by Mr. Valencia Rodríguez that additional provisions should be included in the Criminal Code to meet the requirements of article 4 of the Convention. Although article 60 of the Criminal Code contained specific provisions on discrimination, no information had been provided about discrimination cases before the courts. He wished to know what role the courts played in such cases.

45. Mr. BOYD, welcoming the high-level delegation and stressing the importance of a constructive dialogue, said he would focus his comments on the specific allegations made by NGOs concerning the treatment of ethnic minorities, in particular the Hmong people. Over the years there had been persistent allegations of military abuses and atrocities, ethnic cleansing and other acts of discrimination against the Hmong people which, if not sponsored by the State,

seemed to have been condoned by it. Prior to the current meeting, the Committee had been provided with graphic evidence of the bombing of Hmong villages using neurotoxin agents, the mining of their food foraging trails, and more seriously the slaughter of five children in May 2003. The Committee was obliged to inquire into allegations that had threshold levels of credibility and while the videotape of the slaughter did not show the perpetrators, witnesses had given testimony implicating the military. If the allegations were true they constituted an atrocity; if they were not true they demonstrated a profound mistrust in the State by the Lao people. Such a situation should not be allowed to persist and the issue at stake was how the Committee could assist the State party in that connection. The use of military force would not provide a lasting solution. Instead, dialogue should be established with the ethnic minorities with a view to creating a just peace and integrating them into mainstream society, particularly from the economic standpoint.

46. In conclusion, he sought information concerning the inquiry conducted into the slaughter of the five Hmong children and the reaction of the Hmong community and national human rights bodies to its conclusions. He asked what lessons the State party had drawn from the incident.

47. Mr. THORNBERRY, referring to demographic composition, observed that the term “indigenous” had not been used by the State party, yet the description of the type of economy of the different groups and minorities concerned suggested that the term might be appropriate. In that connection, he recommended a reading of article 1 of the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). He enquired to what extent the principle of self-identification was applied in compiling population statistics.

48. He sought clarification regarding the phrase “collective property” in paragraph 48 of the report, noting that many States had adapted their property-owning regimes to take account of the particular needs of different cultural groups.

49. He would welcome more information on the various resettlement programmes under way, in particular why they were necessary and whether the consent of the persons concerned was required. On the question of compensation he drew attention to paragraph 5 of the Committee’s General Recommendation XXIII on the rights of indigenous peoples. Given that participation was a key notion in modern human rights law, he asked to what extent there was group participation in development programmes.

50. He expressed concern about the statement in paragraph 73 to the effect that efforts had been made to leave behind outdated customs and ways of life. Such an approach represented a departure from the principles of equality, respect and concern enshrined in the Convention and introduced an element of cultural superiority. He wished to know exactly what customs were considered as outdated.

51. He stressed the importance of providing education in the languages of minority groups, which could be done a number of different ways. He welcomed government cooperation with UNDP and UNESCO on human rights issues and the protection of heritage sites respectively.

52. Mr. HERNDL welcomed the resumption of the dialogue with the State party after almost 20 years. It had been prompted by the Committee's decision 1 (63) of August 2003, but he wondered what justification there was for so many years of silence. In its reply to the Committee's decision dated 18 September 2003, the reasons given by the State party for having failed to comply with its reporting obligations included limited financial, technical and human resources and the need to resolve economic difficulties. However, he noted that the State party had submitted periodic reports to two other treaty-monitoring bodies during that period - the Committee on the Rights of the Child (1997) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2003).

53. He would welcome information on the progress of ratification procedures relating to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights signed in 2000. He also requested the State party to consider ratifying the amendment to article 8 and making the declaration under article 14 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

54. The report did not give a satisfactory explanation of how the State party was complying with its obligations under article 4. As to the information provided with respect to article 5, paragraph 51 entitled "Freedom of thought, conscience, belief, opinion and expression" focused exclusively on freedom of religion. He was particularly concerned about the restrictions imposed on freedom of religion and worship by articles 4, 11 and 13 of the Prime Ministerial Decree No. 92/PM of 5 July 2002, as detailed in that paragraph, and would welcome further clarification of the matter. On the whole, the report did not provide a clear picture of how the State party was implementing the provisions of the Convention.

55. Mr. LINDGREN ALVES endorsed Mr. de Gouttes' remarks concerning the political situation in the country and animism. With regard to the latter, it was worthwhile noting that the Black movement in Brazil had sought official recognition of the Yoruba creed. There was clearly a need for improvements in legislation, particularly with regard to article 4 of the Convention. The State party should follow the detailed recommendations made by Mr. Amir in order to ensure compliance with its reporting obligations in future. The Committee's seeming lack of confidence in the Government was largely attributable to the 20-year gap in reporting. Further clarification of the allegations of violence was essential to ascertain whether they concerned isolated incidents or whether there was a situation of undeclared war against certain minority groups. Clearly poverty was a major problem, but it should on no account be used as a pretext for violating the provisions of the Convention.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.