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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 29 September 2006, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. DE ALBA (Mexico)

later: Mr. GODET (Switzerland)
(Vice-President)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.20 a.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251 OF
15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED “HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL” (agenda item 2) (continued)

Presentation of reports followed by interactive dialogue:

Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict
(E/N.4/2006/66)

1. Ms. COOMARASWAMY (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict) said that by establishing the Human Rights Council the United Nations had placed human rights on an equal footing with security and economic and social development. She therefore hoped to develop an active partnership with the Council on the issue of children and armed conflict, which not only posed a threat to international peace and security but was also a major human rights concern. The protection of children affected by war called for a rights-based approach that recognized the responsibility of all actors to address violations of children's most fundamental rights. At the core of such advocacy lay efforts to identify the perpetrators of grave abuses and bring them to justice through various “destinations for action” (E/CN.4/2006/66, para. 5), key among which was the Human Rights Council. Such efforts involved close cooperation with partners in the field, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as Member States and local and international child protection non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
2. In October 2006 the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict would launch a strategic framework for the next two years which had as its main objectives to: support global initiatives to end grave violations against children in armed conflict; promote right-based protection for children in armed conflict; make the concerns of children in armed conflict an integral part of peacekeeping and peace-building efforts; and raise awareness of children in armed conflict issues before, during and after conflict situations. Pursuit of those objectives would involve strict monitoring and reporting of violations, mainstreaming of the issue in all international efforts and facilitating research in such key areas as international criminal law and the child, the girl child, the needs and concerns of former boy soldiers and transitional justice. In cooperation with UNICEF and other United Nations partners, her office would conduct a multi-stakeholder study, to be submitted to the General Assembly, on developments during the 10 years since the initial groundbreaking study on the subject by Graça Machel (A/51/306) had appeared.
3. In recent years her Office had advocated a reorientation of the international community's efforts from the elaboration of standards to ensuring the implementation of those standards on the ground. That effort had resulted in the endorsement by the Security Council of the monitoring and reporting action plan proposed by the Secretary-General in his 2005 report to the Security Council and the General Assembly on children and armed conflict (A/59/695-S/2005/72); moreover, in its resolution 1612 (2005) the Council had also called for the implementation of that plan and had provided for the establishment of a Security Council working group on children and armed conflict, consisting of all its members, to review

monitoring reports, recommend targeted measures against violators and bring findings to the attention of other “destinations for action”. The Working Group had adopted a number of conclusions and recommendations following the submission by the Secretary-General of his twentieth report on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2005/832), which also dealt with children and armed conflict. Those recommendations had led to the adoption of practical measures to combat violations of children’s rights, including the sending of a letter to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo urging it to take specific action to combat impunity. Her office had also made a contribution to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Sudan (S/2005/821), a question that was also being addressed by the Security Council Working Group. Both the establishment of the Working Group and the practical measures the Group had taken were signs of the Security Council’s intention to deepen its engagement on the issue of children and armed conflict and to give it sustained attention throughout the year.

4. Although efforts to engage human rights bodies and actors both in the field and in Geneva were progressing, as evidenced by the involvement in monitoring and reporting of activities of OHCHR in Nepal and UNHCR in Thailand, such mainstreaming of the issue needed to be strengthened further. High-level child protection specialists should be placed in all the specialized agencies, and increased attention should be given to the question of children affected by armed conflict in the regular work of the Human Rights Council. In particular, the Council should continue to incorporate in its discussions and resolutions specific concerns regarding children in armed conflict when considering country-specific and thematic human rights issues. She welcomed the practice of incorporating a section on children affected by armed conflict in the reports of the Council’s special procedures mandate-holders and looked forward to working closely with them in that regard.

5. Global events of the past year had adversely affected the situation of children in armed conflict, giving rise to fears that the basic principles of international humanitarian law were being called into question. The Human Rights Council should consider it a primary duty to ensure the protection of civilians and respect for human rights during armed conflict. It should resolve not to tolerate impunity, but rather to reassert the independent moral voice of the global community backed by the support of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

6. Ms. POHJANKUKKA (Finland) said that her country was firmly committed to addressing the situation of children in armed conflict and was actively implementing the European Union Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict adopted in 2003. Finland considered the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict to be an important contribution to the international community’s efforts to protect the human rights of children in the context of armed conflict. She asked the Special Representative to give her an assessment of the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to date. She wondered what the most urgent human rights concerns identified while implementing the mechanism in the seven pilot countries had been. Her Government would give careful consideration to implementing the Special Representative’s proposals regarding efforts to engage the human rights bodies in the promotion and protection of the human rights of children in armed conflict.

7. Ms. WIJEMANNE (Sri Lanka) welcomed the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict. As both an affected country and one of the first countries to draw the world's attention to the abhorrent practice of recruiting and using children as soldiers, Sri Lanka urged the international community to take swift and decisive action to end the impunity of non-State actors who continued to recruit child soldiers.

8. She hoped that the fact-finding mission to Sri Lanka by the Special Representative's Special Adviser in November 2006 would lead to a firm commitment by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to end all under-age recruitment. The Government of Sri Lanka regretted that despite efforts to engage LTTE through an action plan for children affected by war signed in 2003, no positive results had been achieved and the recruitment and use of child soldiers continued unabated. It was therefore of utmost importance to review and redevelop that action plan in order to curtail the risks to which children were exposed when they were used in direct combat training activities or in a support capacity.

9. Mr. VIGNY (Switzerland) welcomed the recent reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2006/389) and in the Sudan (S/2006/662). His delegation also welcomed the recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on children and armed conflict concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly the recommendation that the Security Council should consider and forward to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo grave concerns about repeated human rights violations. He wished to know which countries the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict intended to visit and what reports by geographical area were scheduled for the near future. He asked whether a set of best practices had been devised for the inclusion of non-State actors in the work of her Office and whether demobilization and reintegration programmes in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan made provision for improving the specific medical and psychological assistance provided to children, especially girls, who had been subjected to sexual violence.

10. Ms. FILOTAS (Canada) said that her Government welcomed the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict and looked forward to updates on the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and of the action plan. She wished to know what the biggest challenges were in implementing Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and how Canada could contribute more effectively to that effort.

11. Although children became more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS during armed conflict, HIV/AIDS was not mentioned in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), nor was it addressed in the Secretary-General's recent reports on the situations in the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She asked whether the Special Representative believed it was important to integrate HIV/AIDS into the process of reporting on children and armed conflict.

12. Mr. MARDALIYEV (Azerbaijan) reiterated his delegation's support for the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict. His delegation welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), but disagreed with the notion that monitoring and reporting should address only those situations of armed conflict that were currently on the agenda of the Security Council. The function of monitoring

and reporting was primarily preventive and should therefore also address situations of armed conflict that were included in the agenda of the General Assembly as well. He asked the Special Representative whether her Office planned to undertake activities in regions other than Asia and Africa and requested her to include in her next report a special section on the impact of protracted armed conflicts on children as well as examples of the extension of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to cover grave violations of children's rights in such situations.

13. Ms. HORSINGTON (Australia) said that her Government strongly supported international efforts to address the violations of children's rights that occurred in situations of conflict, including the widespread recruitment and use of child soldiers. Australia had been active in ratifying international instruments that sought to establish children's rights in law and practice. On 26 September 2006 it had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which demonstrated the country's further commitment to the promotion and protection of children's rights in that area.

14. She welcomed the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict and her recommendations for incorporating the issue of children affected by armed conflict into the policies, programmes and activities of key United Nations human rights bodies and for ensuring the effective application of international standards for the protection of children in armed conflict.

15. Ms. KHVAN (Russian Federation) said that her delegation considered the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict to be an important contribution to the general effort by the international community to protect vulnerable groups during armed conflicts. She wished to know what criteria had been used to determine the six categories of violations of children's rights that would be covered by the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

16. Mr. MUSA (Observer for the Sudan) said that his delegation categorically rejected the accusations made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict regarding the use of children in armed conflicts by the Sudanese Government. The Sudan's laws of military engagement strictly prohibited the use of children in hostilities. There had, however, been instances of violations of children's rights by other parties, and there was a need for health and education services for the children concerned.

17. Mr. CERDA (Argentina) said that it was indispensable to identify those responsible for the recruitment of children as soldiers and to ensure that they were brought to justice. Argentina had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. He endorsed the Special Representative's recommendation aimed at ensuring coordination with the mandate-holders of the Council's special procedures mechanisms and with the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Violence against women could not be separated from the issue of children and armed conflict and he suggested that, given her experience as former Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, the Special Representative might be able to offer some insight into the plight of women in such circumstances.

18. Ms. FUKUSHIMA (World Young Women's Christian Association (WYWCA)) speaking also on behalf of the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCAs), United Nations Watch, International Inner Wheel, the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, Inc. (FAWCO) and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), called upon the Council to take long-term, comprehensive action to ensure the rights and well-being of girls in armed conflicts. During armed conflicts sexual violence accelerated the spread of HIV/AIDS, as the infection rate was higher among combatants than in the general population. Yet even the end of an armed conflict did not necessarily improve the situation of girls, who were often unable to heal physically and psychologically because the health services, education and legal support offered to them were inadequate, and the social stigma attached to victims of rape and sexual violence made them reluctant to seek treatment.

19. Governments and the Council should take action to integrate international human rights standards into national legal frameworks so that those responsible for such crimes could be brought to justice. They should also allocate resources for post-conflict reconstruction to ensure the adequate provision of social services for victims of sexual violence and integrate HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment into conflict prevention programmes.

20. Ms. PARKER (International Educational Development) expressed concern that not enough attention had been paid in some countries, in particular Sri Lanka, to the problem of child soldiers. She welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative's Special Adviser in Sri Lanka where over 200,000 children, mostly Tamils, had been displaced by the armed conflict, and many thousands of others, mainly Tamils and Muslims, were trapped in conflict zones. Many were at serious risk of starvation and physical harm because the Government impeded the delivery of humanitarian aid to Tamil areas. There was also clear evidence of deliberate attacks on aid workers and Tamil children by the Sri Lankan military. Such concerns far outweighed the alleged recruitment of child soldiers by the Tamil opposition forces. According to UNICEF, as of 31 August 2006 there were 613 known cases of soldiers under the age of 18 in the LTTE forces; all were presumably older than 15, the minimum age for recruitment under the Geneva Conventions, and there was no evidence that any had taken part in combat.

21. Mr. KANTOR (North South XXI) said that his organization was very concerned about reports that children had been used as human shields during the recent war in Lebanon. A number of special rapporteurs had visited Lebanon on fact-finding missions to report on Israeli crimes committed during the war. The evidence found by his organization and other NGOs indicated that children had been the victims of that conflict but had never been used as human shields. However, displaced women and children had been deliberately massacred by the Israeli military in acts that were war crimes and crimes against humanity, for example in Marjayoun and at the bases of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). According to some reports, more than 1 million cluster bombs had been dropped during the last days of the conflict. On average, they were currently killing a Lebanese child every day, but the toll would soon rise as Lebanese farmers and their children began the harvest season.

22. Ms. COOMARASWAMY (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict) said that the Security Council had requested an evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the monitoring and reporting mechanism set up under

Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), and that the evaluation report would be issued in November 2006. The mechanism did indeed provide timely and accurate information, which was subject to verification by a steering committee of United Nations partners and, subsequently, by a specific task force and the Secretary-General's Office. There already were checks and balances in the system, and they were apparently working well; all members of the Security Council had expressed satisfaction with the quality of such reports.

23. She had appointed Mr. Alan Rock as Special Adviser to her office for Sri Lanka. He would visit the country to enter into a constructive dialogue with both parties on the recruitment of child soldiers and other grave violations committed against children. Her visit to Uganda had been quite successful, as the Government had agreed to demobilize any children who had become members of the military and had also accepted monitoring by the United Nations. Hopefully, the current peace talks would give due importance to the demobilization and reintegration into society of children. As for future missions, she currently had plans to visit Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, and she was contemplating visits to Myanmar and Nepal. She had begun a 10-year study of the problem of children in armed conflict, which she hoped would elaborate best practices for dealing with that phenomenon in the future. It was necessary to focus on the reintegration of child soldiers, as experience had shown that demobilization often resulted in a return to refugee camps and could later lead to their recruitment as members of armed groups or as mercenaries, especially in Africa.

24. The scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism should be extended to cover all situations of concern and all grave violations, and not merely those that involved the recruitment of children or were on the agenda of the Security Council. She believed that her activities must indeed be global in scope, but it was necessary to recognize that security constraints and the lack of a United Nations presence in the field sometimes made it difficult to gather timely and objective information. The six violations to which her report referred - recruitment, abduction, killing and maiming, denial of humanitarian access, attacks on schools and hospitals, and sexual violence against children - had been elaborated by the United Nations Task Force on children and armed conflict on the basis of advice on international humanitarian law provided by the Office of Legal Affairs.

25. While it was true that the armed forces of the Sudan did not recruit child soldiers, in practice there was a great deal of recruitment by non-State actors, including some very closely associated with the Sudanese Government. She hoped that her visit to that country would provide an opportunity for a constructive dialogue on the subject.

26. It was crucial to fight impunity. The International Criminal Court had begun hearing its very first case on the question of the use of child soldiers. Hopefully, that action would subsequently have a deterrent effect.

27. Mr. GODET (Switzerland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Statement in exercise of the right of reply

28. Ms. FERNANDO (Sri Lanka) said that once again a representative of International Educational Development had taken the floor to spread disinformation about the situation in

Sri Lanka. NGOs that accredited LTTE leaders to take part in Council sessions should instead use their influence to persuade LTTE to renounce the use of terrorism and violence so that all the children of Sri Lanka could grow up without risk and in peace.

Report of the Independent Expert on technical cooperation and advisory services in Liberia
(E/CN.4/2006/114)

29. Ms. ABAKA (Independent Expert on technical cooperation and advisory services in Liberia) said that she was pleased to be able to inform the Council of a number of positive developments and success stories that had taken place in Liberia in the time since she had written her report. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission had been established and was seeking technical support so that it could fulfil its mandate. Efforts to establish the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, whose work would be crucial to ensuring sustainable peace in Liberia, were also nearing completion, and an independent nomination committee of experts had begun soliciting community input and had drawn up a shortlist of 25 candidates for membership on the Commission. A review of national legislation and its conformity with international human rights law was under way. The Liberian Government had ratified many international human rights instruments, but had fallen behind in the submission of reports to treaty bodies. The Government had plans to create a law reform commission, which would be crucial to establishing effective human rights for Liberians. It was to be hoped that it would correct the imbalances in governance in the Liberian hinterland.

30. Although there were still serious shortcomings in the Liberian justice system, there had been some positive developments. Most of the courts, including the circuit courts, were in operation, but there was an urgent need for technical staff to reduce backlogs and ensure that suspects were not unduly held in detention. The Chief Justice and the Minister of Justice were committed to correcting the situation but would require support from the United Nations and the international community at large. January 2006 had seen the adoption of the new Rape Law, which took into account gang rape and provided for increased penalties. While adoption of the new law was important, enforcement would be crucial, and the national authorities required assistance in that regard. There had been some encouraging cases in which harsh sentences had been handed down.

31. In March 2006, following joint efforts by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), UNICEF and a number of NGOs to investigate the human rights situation in orphanages throughout the country, the Ministry had announced that it would close 69 of the 108 orphanages that had been reviewed. A group known as the Union of Orphanages, representing owners of institutions that had been found to be substandard, was resisting the closures. In some cases there were allegations that the owners stood to gain financially from the orphanages. For the time being, the orphanages had been permitted to remain open.

32. The lack of enjoyment of the right to an adequate standard of living was obviously a source of concern. The Government must be encouraged to promote the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights as a prerequisite for sustainable peace. The fact that a large number of former combatants had not gone through the rehabilitation and reintegration process posed a security risk not only for Liberia but for the entire subregion. The Government's 150-day action plan addressed the right to education, but the country required international assistance in order to

make progress in that field. Sanctions against Liberia should be lifted, as most of the programmes launched by the Government to guarantee economic, social and cultural rights could not be implemented without proper financial support. She called upon the Council not to repeat the mistakes of the past, but to ensure that Liberia was not abandoned by the international community. The fact that the country had an elected Government did not mean that it no longer required technical assistance. The Council should renew the technical cooperation mandate so that the new legislature and judiciary could be informed of the country's human rights obligations. OHCHR, too, should provide appropriate support, for example by organizing additional seminars and colloquiums in Liberia.

33. Mr. THOMAS (Observer for Liberia) said that it was true that much remained to be done in the specific areas mentioned by the Independent Expert in her informative report. Nevertheless, the Government had made significant progress in the face of daunting post-war reconstruction challenges. It had set up a task force to draft a plan of action for the establishment of a law reform commission by mid-2007 to deal, inter alia, with the ratification of international instruments and issues such as the Hinterland Regulations. The task force had produced a bill which was now before the Legislative Assembly. Efforts were being made to ratify all the instruments signed by Liberia by January 2007 and to start implementing the instruments to which it was a party. However, there was an immediate need for technical assistance to build capacity for the production of reports to the treaty bodies.

34. The Government acknowledged the serious logistical and financial problems facing judicial personnel in the hinterland, but some progress had been made. In particular, UNMIL was helping the human rights unit of the Ministry of Justice to build the Ministry's capacity, and in June 2006 it had collaborated with the Ministry on a four-day national workshop on strengthening the rule of law, human rights protection and best practices.

35. The Norwegian Government had made a valuable contribution to the reform of the National Police that included the construction of 10 new police stations, while UNMIL was building a further 12 to 15 stations under a quick-impact project.

36. The independent expert had not suggested any remedial action to address corruption by judicial officials involved in rape cases, but the Government had made tremendous efforts to deal with the issue, notably by adopting the new Rape Law, which expanded the definition of rape and took into account the relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

37. The report of the National Rubber Plantations Task Force had highlighted the human rights and socio-economic problems of rubber plantation workers. It should be noted that some of Liberia's rubber plantations were operated under concessions granted 50 years previously, when little attention had been paid to human rights. The report had marked a turning point in the development of Government policies to address the issue within a human rights framework.

38. New measures had been taken to address the problem of substandard and illegally operated orphanages. As the Independent Expert had noted, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare was to close 69 of the 108 orphanages which had been reviewed.

39. The issue of United Nations sanctions on Liberia's diamond and timber industries called for urgent attention. The embargo on timber had in fact been lifted, and the Government had

enacted a legal framework for reform of the forestry sector. In collaboration with the United States of America, the Government was complying with the international community's request to introduce the diamond certification scheme under the Kimberley Process.

40. The Government was very concerned about the upsurge in murder, armed robbery and rape and was working with the United Nations to train the police to combat the high crime rate, but logistical and hardware shortages were hampering the effective functioning of the security apparatus.

41. Liberia was particularly grateful to the Independent Expert for recommending that the Council should renew the mandate for technical cooperation and advisory services in Liberia.

42. Mr. JAZAÏRY (Algeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Independent Expert's report was a shining example of how a mandate should be carried out. The positive developments in Liberia were encouraging: the measures adopted by the Government promised much for the promotion and protection of human rights. He called on States, OHCHR and regional institutions to furnish strong technical and financial support to the Liberian Government in order to attain the human rights objectives set out in the report.

43. Ms. RAINNE (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Independent Expert's work made a valuable contribution to Liberia's progress towards a stable and democratic future. The European Union would like to know her views on the capacity of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the ways in which work under her mandate could help the Commission, and the conditions in Liberia's prisons. Comments on the extent of ethnic discrimination and on the risks posed by ethnic tensions to the country's long-term stability would also be welcome, as would updated information on returning refugees.

44. Mr. RODRÍGUEZ CUADROS (Peru) welcomed the progress made in four basic areas: consolidation of a democratic system based on the rule of law; improvement of the administration of justice; combating impunity; and the work of the National Rubber Plantations Task Force. His delegation would like to know what additional action could be taken to combat impunity and correct the defects in the administration of justice.

45. Mr. ASIEDU (Ghana) said that his delegation welcomed the positive developments described by the Independent Expert. However, Liberia was still facing a number of human rights challenges that it could not tackle without assistance from the international community, which should continue to provide support. Ghana would continue to furnish assistance within the limits of its resources.

46. Mr. LAST (United Kingdom) said that his delegation would like the Independent Expert to indicate what measures were in force to combat the alarming incidence of sexual and gender-based violence and what further measures were needed to improve the protection of women and girls. He also wished to know how she thought her mandate could be of assistance to the Independent National Commission on Human Rights.

47. Mr. SMELLER (Observer for the United States of America) said that the Independent Expert had rightly commended the positive developments in Liberia without overlooking continuing human rights problems. His delegation noted her recommendation on the

engagement of judges, magistrates and judicial officers from similar jurisdictions and would like to know what other recommendations she had for addressing the serious defects in the administration of justice. It would also like the Independent Expert to indicate the areas in which she was looking for most progress in securing respect for human rights.

48. Ms. ABAKA (Independent Expert on technical cooperation and advisory services in Liberia), replying to the questions raised by the representative of Finland, said that the members of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were very committed to their work but needed more technical assistance. Her role was to ensure that they always kept the human rights perspective in mind, with regard to perpetrators as well as to victims, for both groups had suffered extreme mental agony. In fact the Commission needed the help of clinical psychologists, but funds were scarce, and assistance would be required from the international community. She also sought to impress on the Commission that it should incorporate a gender perspective in its work. The Government of the United States of America had funded some improvements in prison conditions, but much more was required. Male and female prisoners were no longer housed in the same facilities, but some convicted criminals were still being set free because the prisons were full. The human rights of prisoners was another issue calling for attention; once again, international assistance was needed.

49. She could inform the representative of the United Kingdom that despite the enactment of the new Rape Law the incidence of rape had increased. However, the reason might be that women and girls were now more willing to overcome their traditional reluctance and actually report cases of rape. A special women's and girls' unit had been created in the National Police; UNICEF was supporting the unit, but more assistance was required as services were expanded to the hinterland, where most of the violence against women and girls occurred.

50. In reply to the question from the observer for the United States of America she said that it would be useful for Governments to provide bursaries for law students and to support the provision of legal aid, which was currently non-existent.

51. She urged the international community to keep the situation in Liberia on its agenda and to continue to furnish support so that peace could be sustained.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.