



**Convention against Torture
and Other Cruel, Inhuman
or Degrading Treatment
or Punishment**

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Summary record of the first part (public)* of the 957th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 2 November 2010, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Grossman

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention

Initial report of Ethiopia

* No summary record was prepared for the second part (closed) of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention

Initial report of Ethiopia (CAT/C/ETH/1; HRI/CORE/ETH/2008)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the Ethiopian delegation took places at the Committee table.*

2. **The Chairperson** said that the Committee was pleased to welcome the delegation of Ethiopia for the consideration of its first periodic report, which should have been submitted in 1995. He hoped that the first meeting marked the start of fruitful collaboration between the Committee and the State party.

3. **Mr. Yimer** (Ethiopia) said that since the fall of the military junta in 1991, Ethiopia had made major strides in the promotion and protection of human rights, by virtue of the new Constitution and the consolidation of democratic governance. Financial constraints had prevented it from submitting its reports to the treaty bodies at the time they were due. However, with the cooperation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), it had completed several overdue reports, among them the initial report to the Committee against Torture which the Committee was about to consider. A Memorandum of Understanding had been signed by Ethiopia and the East Africa Regional Office of OHCHR, expanding their cooperation to cover other areas such as capacity-building for national human rights institutions, and human rights awareness training for law enforcement officers and prison staff. The assessment of its human rights performance under the Universal Periodic Review had been successful, and Ethiopia had accepted a great many of the recommendations of the Human Rights Council, many of which had a bearing on the implementation of the Convention against Torture.

4. The initial report had been prepared in accordance with the Committee's guidelines on the preparation of reports. An inter-ministerial commission, assisted by a committee of experts, had been set up to oversee the process – with the participation of representatives of regional and federal authorities, national human rights bodies, civil society and academia. The Committee would find, in the core document (HRI/CORE/ETH/2008), information on the federal structure of the country, as well as on the constitutional and institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human rights at the federal and regional levels.

5. Ethiopia was emerging from a cruel past in which the Government had used the institutions of the State to perpetrate egregious abuses of human rights and acts of torture on a mass scale. After coming to power in 1991, the transitional Government had brought to justice officials of the former military regime who had been directly involved in mass murder, torture, and other crimes committed under the dictatorship. The new federal Constitution, which had come into effect in 1996, recognized almost all the key human rights and fundamental freedoms protected by international and regional human rights instruments, and barred the application of a statute of limitations for crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. It recognized the primacy of the international human rights instruments to which Ethiopia was a party as tools for the interpretation of the constitutional provisions pertaining to human rights. All persons, without discrimination or distinction, enjoyed the rights guaranteed by the Constitution, which it expressly prohibited all forms of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and ensured that persons in custody would be treated humanely. It also had specific provisions for the protection of women and children from traditional practices, customs and laws that were harmful and prohibited corporal punishment for children. The prohibition against torture was non-derogable, and had been incorporated into all regional constitutions.

6. Several legislative measures had been taken to ensure the compatibility of domestic legislation with the federal Constitution as well as with the Convention against Torture. The new federal Criminal Code, adopted in 2004, contained a comprehensive definition of the crime of torture and provided severe punishments for any act of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading act, including by law enforcement officers. The federal Criminal Code also criminalized the infliction of bodily and psychological harm through such traditional practices as female genital mutilation and child marriage. Laws and regulations had been enacted providing rules of conduct for police, prosecutors, prison wardens and prison officials; any breach of those rules would entail disciplinary measures including dismissal or criminal prosecution. Measures for the investigation and prosecution of persons suspected of having participated in acts of torture were found in the Criminal Procedure Code, which provided for fair and balanced proceedings. As in many other States, the death penalty was still legal. However, a de facto moratorium was in effect, since that penalty was rarely applied.

7. The treatment of prisoners was laid down in Federal Wardens Administration Council of Ministers Regulations No. 137/2007 and No. 138/2007. The Criminal Procedure Code also provided rules and standards. Prisoners could receive visits from family and friends, and meet with their lawyers and religious counsellors. They were provided with sufficient food, acceptable sanitary conditions, access to health care and other necessary services. The protection of their dignity and their right to practice their religion were fully guaranteed. Prisoners who believed their rights had been violated could lodge a complaint and remedies were available if their allegations were found to be credible. Allegations by prisoners that their right to receive visitors or to meet with their lawyers had been violated often turned out to be unsubstantiated.

8. There were no undisclosed detention centres in Ethiopia. After many decades of Government-sponsored abuse and terror, important institutional, administrative and legislative measures had been taken to reform law enforcement institutions and ensure that they operated lawfully. A programme for the professionalization of law enforcement authorities had been established, and evaluations and inspections were carried out on a regular basis to ensure that officers scrupulously implemented laws, directives and codes of conduct. Where breaches occurred, sanctions were applied; several police officers had been dismissed. Police and prison authorities were subject to independent monitoring by the Special Rapporteur on Prisons and Conditions of Detention in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, and a number of civil society organizations. In 2004, the Special Rapporteur on Prisons of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights had visited Ethiopia and had produced a report assessing the conditions of detention and the treatment of prisoners in the country's federal and regional prisons. Some of the recommendations of the report had been instrumental in bringing about prison reform. The Government, in partnership with the NGO Prison Fellowship of Ethiopia, had embarked on several projects to improve the living conditions of prisoners.

9. Independent investigations had been launched to clarify the outbreak of violence among students of Addis Ababa University in the 1990s, the conflicts that occurred in the Gambella region in 2003, and the unrest that followed the elections of 2005. In the student demonstrations in Addis Ababa and the post-election unrest, law enforcement officials had been fully cleared; the investigation into the Gambella incident, however, had revealed that members of the Defence Force had participated; more than 20 had been tried and punished. The allegations of acts of torture in the Oromia and Somali regions were frivolous and unsubstantiated; the Government had moreover allowed the international community, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and a number of NGOs to look into those matters for themselves. In 2007, the Human Rights Council had rejected a confidential communication implicating the Ethiopian Government, which alleged that violations, including acts of

torture, had been committed in the Ogaden (Somali Regional State). The Eritrea-Ethiopia Claims Commission had exonerated Ethiopia and Ethiopian law enforcement officers from allegations of systematic abuse and torture of Eritreans deported during the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea between 1998 and 2000.

10. Ethiopia, like many other countries, faced the challenges of terrorism. Several murderous attacks had been committed in different parts of the country. The Government was determined to use all measures authorized by the law to protect the safety of its citizens and would ensure that any counter-terrorist measures undertaken complied with international norms. Persons suspected of terrorism who had been arrested and detained were entitled to all the guarantees necessary to ensure respect for their dignity during all phases of the proceedings. Ethiopia's deportation legislation and the extradition agreements it had entered into with other countries were consistent with the provisions of the Convention.

11. Education, awareness-raising and training were effectively embodied in the national strategy to prevent torture and victims of torture to seek remedies. In the 2007 report on her mission to Ethiopia (A/HRC/4/9/Add.3), the independent expert on minority issues characterized Ethiopia's human rights education programme as exemplary. Civil and ethical studies were an integral part of primary, secondary, and higher education. Starting in primary school, children learned the core tenets of human rights.

12. Under the Constitution, religious institutions, traditional structures and childcare institutions were required to protect vulnerable persons from harmful traditional practices and corporal punishment. In addition to legislative measures to eradicate such practices, a national coordination mechanism had been set up for that purpose; it was working with educational institutions and traditional bodies.

13. It was important to provide training for police officers, prison staff, members of the defence and security forces, as well as for prosecutors and judges, in order effectively to implement the Convention. The Federal Judicial Training Institute trained future judges and prosecutors in the area of human rights and basic freedoms. Members of the Ethiopian Defence Force had excellent training in international human rights law and international humanitarian law, under cooperation programmes provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). With the assistance of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, universities and civil-society organizations, a number of human rights training programmes had been conducted in key institutions responsible for the implementation of laws. However, despite such efforts, Ethiopia still faced many challenges in the full realization of the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Convention. Ignorance and lack of qualified staff and technical means were significant hurdles to be overcome. The traditional view — that it was necessary to use a reasonable degree of force to secure the truth — had to be confronted with determination; both awareness-raising and capacity-building were essential.

14. **Mr. Gaye** (First Country Rapporteur) said he welcomed the initial report of the State party, noting that it had been submitted 14 years late. In general, the document contained substantial information on legislative measures taken to give effect to the provisions of the Convention, but very few examples of instances in which those laws had been applied. That shortcoming was even more regrettable because the Committee had received information from NGOs and United Nations bodies indicating that the implementation of the Convention in Ethiopia was a matter of concern. In the report on her mission to Ethiopia in 2006 (A/HRC/4/9/Add.3), the independent expert on minority issues had commented that ethnically-based federalism had served to politicize ethnicity as the most salient marker of identity, leading to a dynamic of discrimination and exclusion, and that some of the smallest communities were at risk of disappearing as distinct groups. The independent expert had also drawn attention to the need to take measures to guarantee

freedom for political parties and the media, and the release or fair trial of political opponents, academics, journalists and students currently in detention. Moreover, the fact that the State party had not accepted all the recommendations that were made in the universal periodic review (UPR), which it had undergone in 2009 (A/HRC/13/17), was a cause for concern.

15. The delegation of Ethiopia should indicate whether broad consultations had been carried out for the preparation of the initial report, and whether all parties concerned, including human rights protection bodies and NGOs, had participated. It would be useful to know whether – in cases of conflict between domestic law, and in particular the Constitution, and international law, whether the latter took precedence, and what laws governed the settlement of conflicts of jurisdiction between federal and regional systems.

16. He noted that the concept of torture was referred to but not defined in the Ethiopian Criminal Code. Given that all international instruments ratified by Ethiopia were part of the domestic law, he inquired whether that shortcoming was remedied by the possibility of invoking the definition of torture contained in article 1 of the Convention. Since the initial report contained no specific information on legislative measures adopted for the purpose of preventing torture, in particular when persons were deprived of their liberty, it would be valuable to know whether a distinction was made under Ethiopian law between custody and preventive detention. In that regard, he would appreciate more specific information on how habeas corpus was applied.

17. The report of the State party indicated that those responsible for acts of torture were punished, but did not specify the type of sentences imposed. It also acknowledged that measures taken to prevent violations of the Convention had not been effective enough. He asked the delegation of Ethiopia to cite cases of torture and to give statistics on the number of complaints of torture as well as on prosecutions and convictions resulting from those complaints, specifying the type of sentence imposed, and, if there had been none, the number of acquittals ordered by the courts. Furthermore, he would like to know the causes of the numerous deaths that occurred in Ethiopian prisons, in particular since the State party had asserted that they could not be attributed to the conditions of detention.

18. According to the core document (HRI/CORE/ETH/2008), the Constitution provided for a number of restrictions and derogations limiting human rights and fundamental freedoms in exceptional circumstances, such as the declaration of a state of emergency. He asked what was the impact of a state of emergency on respect for human rights safeguards, and especially on the provisions prohibiting torture and ensuring suspects right of access to a lawyer and a doctor and to contact their family in case of arrest. The Committee had received reports from NGOs indicating that persons had been held incommunicado or in secret prisons for prolonged periods; he would like to know what was the maximum length of custody and pretrial detention.

19. According to information brought to the attention of the Committee, acts of brutality such as extrajudicial killings and rape had been committed by the Ethiopian army in 2007 in the Ogaden. Information on the current situation in that region, and on the results of the investigation launched at the behest of the Government with respect to those violations, would be welcome, as well as on its results. He also noted that the roles of the police and the army were not clearly separated, which gave rise to problems in identifying perpetrators when acts of torture were alleged. In that regard, it would be interesting to know whether an independent authority was responsible for monitoring the activities of the police and the army.

20. According to the information available to the Committee, persons awaiting expulsion were not able to file an appeal before an independent judicial instance in order to determine whether the State party was meeting its obligations with respect to the principle

of non-refoulement. The delegation should explain whether officials in charge of expulsion proceedings were familiar with the human rights instruments, and in particular with the Convention against Torture, and should cite cases in which extradition requests had been accepted or rejected, giving the reasons for the decision. When a foreigner was prosecuted by the Ethiopian courts, was there an independent body to ensure that the consular authorities of the person's country of origin were informed?

21. The delegation should also inform the Committee whether there were rules of evidence, and, if not, how evidence was weighed in practice. Paragraph 48 of the report indicated that, unlike the practice of most countries, non-political crimes were not extraditable. Clarifications of that matter were necessary. Since in Ethiopia, extradition required a treaty, it would be worthwhile to know if anybody had been extradited on the basis of provisions of the Convention. Lastly, he asked the delegation whether domestic law provided for mutual judicial assistance in compliance with the Convention.

22. **Ms. Belmir** (Second Country Rapporteur) took note with satisfaction of the initial report of Ethiopia as well as of the State party's core document. She observed that the report of the independent expert on minority issues on her mission to Ethiopia, cited by Mr. Gaye, offered a clearer picture of the problems faced by the State party and the importance assumed by the Constitution in a federal State with great linguistic and ethnic diversity. With regard to the Ogaden and Oromia, she said that the situation in those areas was similar to a state of emergency, since, as Mr. Gaye had pointed out, the roles of the police and the army overlapped, and rights and freedoms did not seem to be respected. She was concerned that the right to life was not included among the rights that were non-derogable even in the most extreme circumstances, listed by the State party in the core document.

23. With regard to article 10 of the Convention, she observed that the State party carried out many activities in the area of human rights awareness-raising and training, in particular for the members of law enforcement bodies. However, according to paragraph 14 of the initial report, the efforts had not been fruitful. It would be useful to know whether the State party intended to review its human rights training and awareness-raising system.

24. With regard to the rules, instructions, methods and practices of interrogation and the provisions on the custody and treatment of arrested, detained and imprisoned persons, she requested clarification of the role of prosecutors, which seemed to be predominant. She was concerned that arrest and detention were not under the control of the judicial authorities. Paragraph 67 of the core document indicated that the legal framework essentially consisted of the Constitution, domestic legislation, international treaties, and decisions of the Cassation Division of the Federal Supreme Court, and that religious and customary laws applied in family and personal matters if the parties consented to be adjudicated accordingly, provided they did not contravene the Constitution. It would be helpful to know what authority was competent to settle any conflicts between those laws and other provisions of domestic law; clarifications would also be welcome on the meaning of the term "religious laws".

25. According to information brought to the attention of the Committee, the judiciary was often influenced by the executive branch. The delegation should comment on that and describe any measures taken to ensure the independence of the judicial system. It should also comment on reports alleging that in certain areas of the country affected by armed conflict, namely, the Ogaden and Oromia, judges did not review allegations of acts of torture from detainees, for fear of losing their jobs or even their lives. Lastly, she said that she would like to know why Ethiopia had not accepted 32 of the recommendations that had resulted from the universal periodic review, in particular those related to human trafficking, since most of them would not be difficult to implement.

26. **Mr. Mariño Menéndez** would like to know if a state of emergency had been officially declared throughout the country, as seemed to be the case in certain regions, and if so, whether the relevant international instruments were being complied with. It would be interesting to know whether the State party had invoked the right to derogate set out in article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and if so, whether it had abided by the limitations on derogation set out in that article. Certain regions of the country seemed to be affected by armed conflict, although a state of war had not been acknowledged. The situation was even more ambiguous since Ethiopian law did not draw a clear distinction between the struggle against terrorism and military action. Clarification of the legal situation in the country would be particularly useful.

27. He would like to know whether the principle of non-refoulement enshrined in article 3 of the Convention was applicable to all categories of foreigners, without distinction. Although according to information provided by the State party, all persons placed in custody had the right immediately to contact a member of their family, it appeared that the right to consult a lawyer at the start of the detention did not apply. The delegation should explain whether there were rules establishing a deadline for access to a lawyer. The matter of extrajudicial detention arose in the context of counterterrorism legislation, which resembled emergency legislation since it gave the police and the intelligence agencies powers that infringed those of the justice system.

28. As for regional militias, he would like to know whether they were directly accountable to the State and acted under its command, which would mean that the State could be held accountable for human rights violations, and in particular violations of the prohibition against torture, committed by them. Lastly, he asked whether Ethiopia had contemplated raising the age of criminal majority, which was very low, providing special protection to stateless children, of whom there were many in Ethiopia, and prohibiting the corporal punishment of children under all circumstances, including in the home.

29. **Ms. Sveass** noted that the Criminal Code explicitly ranked torture as a crime and established long prison sentences for torturers; she asked how many persons were currently serving prison sentences under those provisions. The Committee had learned that representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had encountered difficulties in entering places of detention. The delegation should inform the Committee which civil society organizations were authorized to visit police holding cells and prisons, and should describe how such visits were arranged. Clarifications of the duties and responsibilities of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission would be welcome. Did the State party plan to take measures to strengthen that body? Several requests to visit places of detention in the country had been sent to the Ethiopian authorities by special-procedures mandate holders, including the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. She would like to know whether the State party intended to agree to them.

30. **Ms. Kleopas** stressed the importance of challenging the impunity of perpetrators of acts of torture and asked whether the State party had taken measures to ensure that allegations against police officers for acts of torture gave rise to independent investigations. She would also like to know whether investigations could be carried out in the absence of a complaint, in cases where there were serious grounds for believing that an act of torture had been committed.

31. According to information brought to the Committee's attention, the practice of torture was widespread in Ethiopia. It would be interesting to hear the delegation's comments on that, and to receive detailed information on the cases of Mr. Hussein Ahmed Osman, Mr. Mezegebu Effa and Mr. Abdi Omar, all three of whom had allegedly been tortured. In addition, she said that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had recommended that Ethiopia take measures to eliminate such harmful

traditional practices as female genital mutilation: what measures had been taken pursuant to that recommendation?

32. **Mr. Bruni** observed that the Act no. 652/2009, Anti-Terrorism Proclamation established that the police could arrest, without need of a warrant, any person suspected of having committed or of planning to commit a terrorist crime, and that the suspect must be brought before a judge within 48 hours. That provision was disturbing because the person arrested had no legal protection during that period, during which the risk of abuse or torture was greatest. The Ethiopian Constitution called for the establishment of a State of Emergency Inquiry Board, responsible for ensuring that no measure taken during the state of emergency was cruel, inhumane or degrading. It would be interesting to know whether that body had in fact been established, and if so, what role it played in relation to the new counterterrorism proclamation.

33. He would also appreciate clarifications as to the persons or organizations empowered to carry out visits to places of detention. In a communication addressed to the Committee in September 2010, Human Rights Watch stated that ICRC had not been authorized to enter the federal prisons, police stations or military detention centres, contrary to what was stated in the report. The delegation should clearly specify whether visits by ICRC had been authorized, and if so, when and where the most recent visit had taken place and what the result had been. The Committee would like to know, in general, how often the institutions mentioned in the report — in particular the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission — carried out visits, whether unannounced visits could be carried out, whether reports containing conclusions and recommendations resulting from those visits were published, and what measures the authorities took in response. In its report of July 2008, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission had drawn attention to the deplorable conditions in most detention facilities, most of which were overcrowded, and had recommended that measures should be taken to remedy the situation. The delegation should indicate the current occupancy rate of those facilities and the measures taken to improve conditions in them.

34. **Ms. Gaer** said she was surprised that the Government had taken so long to submit its report to the Committee and invited the delegation to give the reasons for the delay. She pointed out that the Special Rapporteur on torture had sent the Ethiopian Government many requests to visit that country since 1995, and asked the delegation whether there were plans to authorize such a visit, and if not, why.

35. The universal periodic review of the State party had revealed that a recent law classified NGOs receiving more than 10 per cent of their budget from foreign sources as “foreign charities”, and prevented them from working on human rights. The Government of Ethiopia had rejected the recommendation that it should repeal the law; clarifications should be given. It would be valuable, in that regard, to know how many registration requests had been submitted by NGOs, and how many had been accepted.

36. Sexual violence, child marriage, and abductions of women and children into forced marriages seemed to be widespread in Ethiopia. The delegation should describe measures taken by the Government to eliminate those practices and explain the provision stipulating that the perpetrator of an abduction or rape would not be punished if the victim agreed to marry him.

37. The information before the Committee indicated that many children living in rural areas were victims of trafficking of children for domestic servitude, and, less frequently, sexual exploitation. According to the 2009 human rights report drawn up by the State Department of the United States of America, although many investigations had been initiated, none had resulted in prosecutions. That was surprising in view of the fact that

such practices were widely denounced, by the Ethiopian Government among others. Comments on that matter would be welcome.

38. **Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga**, noting with satisfaction that the State party had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, stressed the importance of ensuring that detained persons who were disabled, in particular those with a psychosocial disability, should be separated from other detainees. In addition, he would like to know what measures were being taken to assist women who were victims of harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation.

39. **Mr. Wang Xuexian** observed that the scope of the counterterrorism legislation was very broad and encompassed actions that caused serious damage to property, the environment, or the historical or cultural heritage, or disrupted any public service, raising the question of how that law was implemented in practice. He asked for clarification of the scope of the Act.

40. **The Chairperson** pointed out that the delegation had stated that the death penalty was rarely carried out and that the existence of a de facto moratorium implied that no death sentence would ever be carried out. He would like to know whether the death penalty had been enforced during the period in question, and, if not, whether the authorities planned to extend the moratorium. Noting that there was no single definition of torture in Ethiopian law, he asked whether there were plans to incorporate into the Criminal Code a definition of torture that conformed to that in article 1 of the Convention. The Committee would also appreciate copies of any guidelines or instructions issued to law enforcement personnel and prison officials, as well as of any relevant training manuals, to enable it better to understand how the State party complied with its obligations to prevent torture.

41. The State party should also provide a list of the dates on which states of emergency had been declared since 1994, and details of the circumstances under which the Government had declared them. Information on the membership and activities of the State of Emergency Inquiry Board would also be useful.

42. The Criminal Code contained no clear provisions to determine responsibility when torture was carried out on the orders of a superior. Article 743, paragraph 2 stipulated that a person who had committed a crime was not punishable if he or she was obeying the order of a superior acting within his authority and did not exceed the order received. Another provision penalized anyone who committed a crime on the orders of a superior if they realized the criminal nature of the act, and listed the type of crimes contemplated; torture was not one of them. The delegation should explain why torture was not explicitly included among the crimes that could not be justified by invoking the order of a superior. It should also provide data on the number of prosecutions launched since 2004 under article 424 of the Ethiopian Criminal Code, as well as on the charges laid, convictions handed down and penalties imposed.

43. He asked whether any information was available on the number of cases in which prosecutors had been demoted or dismissed for failure to comply with human rights standards or to uphold human dignity in accordance with Council of Ministers Regulation No. 44-1998 regarding federal prosecutors. Furthermore, he would appreciate a list of States with which Ethiopia had concluded judicial assistance agreements together with information on whether the agreements covered torture and which agency was responsible for requests for judicial assistance.

44. In view of the fact that ICRC had been expelled from the Ogaden in 2007, he wondered whether the organization was currently working in Ethiopia, and what its relations with the country's authorities were. According to a report from Amnesty International, 4,500 students from Addis Ababa University had been arrested in the demonstrations that took place in June 2005 and 190 of them had been detained for more

than one month. Some students had been ill-treated; and some forced to walk on their knees over sharp stones. He would appreciate clarification of the delegation's assertion that law enforcement personnel had not been involved. It would also be interesting to know whether the Civil Code provided for reparation for the families of persons who died as a result of torture, whether reparation had already been provided for acts of torture or ill-treatment by public officials, and if so, in what form.

45. With respect to violence against women, it would be interesting to know how many prosecutions had been carried out for domestic violence, how many persons had been convicted of rape during the period under consideration, what sentences had been handed down and what compensation awarded.

46. **The Chairperson** invited the members of the delegation of Ethiopia to continue its dialogue with the Committee at the next meeting.

The first part (public) of the meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.