



## International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

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### Human Rights Committee

#### 106th session

#### Summary record of the 2925th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 16 October 2012, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Majodina

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant**  
(continued)

*Fourth periodic report of the Philippines (CCPR/C/PHL/4; CCPR/C/PHL/Q/4 and Add.1) (continued)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the Philippines took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Rivas Posada** asked what measures were being taken to reduce severe overcrowding in prisons and to increase prison capacity. He also wished to know if there were any plans to increase the number of pretrial detention centres or to enlarge them.
3. He considered that corruption in the judiciary could not be eradicated by merely issuing guidelines. Drastic measures were likewise needed to address the problem of excessive delays in bringing suspects to trial.
4. Did the Act Penalizing the Commission of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Anti-Torture Act of 2009) explicitly mention testimony or confessions obtained through torture, ill-treatment or coercion? If such a reference was absent, he was anxious to learn to what extent such testimony or confessions were used in practice during trials and what action the State party was taking to prevent that use.
5. **Ms. Waterval** wished to ascertain the truth of reports that the police sometimes detained people without a proper arrest warrant and that there had been cases where the authorities had violated the legal safeguards against arbitrary detention. She urged the State party to take effective measures to reduce the length of pretrial detention and to ensure the systematic compilation of an up-to-date list of detention centres under the jurisdiction of the Philippine National Police Force (PNP), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and other government units and of personal data on detainees and the crimes they were suspected of committing.
6. The Committee wished to know whether two Filipinos, living in the Philippines, could divorce under domestic law. She urged the State party to legalize divorce and remarriage after a divorce.
7. She also enquired how many low-income families had made use of free legal services when seeking to annul their marriages. What measures had been taken, in addition to Republic Act 9255, to protect the rights of children after the informal separation of their parents? How many illegitimate children had availed themselves of their right under that Act to use their father's surname? What happened if their affiliation was not expressly recognized?
8. The Committee considered that the fees imposed for the late registration or non-registration of a birth placed a significant burden on poor and vulnerable groups. Was the State party contemplating measures to introduce free registration of births after the 30-day time limit? Had Bill 4649 been enacted into law? What was its status? She wondered if any State organ existed to facilitate an amicable agreement between parents on child custody after an informal separation. In addition, the Committee would appreciate information on the status of foundlings and children of unidentified parentage with regard to their birth registration.
9. When would the three-year strategic plan to eradicate child pornography be evaluated? She also wished to know if the State party intended to enact legislation to combat cyberpornography and cyberprostitution.

10. **Mr. O'Flaherty** asked the State party to provide data on the current incidence of trafficking in persons. Was the Philippines a country of origin, destination or transit? He would be grateful if the State party could say what groups of persons were trafficked and if internal trafficking took place. He requested information about the success of or constraints on anti-trafficking programmes involving the Philippines. Referring to the strict border controls introduced as part of the process of combating trafficking, he asked whether the State party controlled emigration or only immigration, as restrictions on Filipinos leaving their home country might raise human rights issues.

11. While he welcomed the removal of formal impediments to the enjoyment by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community of its rights, he requested information on the steps taken to combat continuing prejudice in society which hampered the de facto enjoyment of that community's full rights. Had the Supreme Court's findings in the *Ang Ladlad* case been used as a framework to combat that prejudice? He wondered whether the Philippines had contemplated acting as a regional leader in securing the protection of the rights of the LGBT community.

12. **Mr. Iwasawa**, noted that, despite the Government's efforts to combat child labour, some reports indicated that its incidence had risen by 30 per cent over the previous decade and that some minors were subjected to the worst forms of child labour. In that connection, he wished to know who decided what occupations were hazardous to children and what criteria were used as a basis for that decision. Since some families forced their children to go out to work, he asked if any mechanism existed to protect children when they were rescued from their employers and returned to their families. What powers did labour inspectors have? Lastly, he requested data on children in the informal economy and children who were self-employed.

13. Turning to the right to privacy, he regretted that the State party had not responded to the issue raised in paragraph 21 of the list of issues and he therefore asked the delegation to comment on allegations that victims of enforced disappearances had told their families beforehand that they were under surveillance, that their families were also placed under surveillance and that such surveillance was part of the military's internal peace and security plan which had been put into effect in 2011.

14. As far as the rights of minorities were concerned, he said that the Committee would appreciate detailed information on measures to address human rights violations of indigenous peoples in areas of armed conflict. He asked the delegation to comment on allegations that the military had driven members of an indigenous community from their homes and had killed some of them, and that critics of mining and energy projects in areas with large indigenous populations had been killed by the armed forces. Was it true that the AFP had revived the vigilante group *Alsa Lumad* and was arming indigenous groups as part of its counter-insurgency strategy against the New Peoples' Army? Lastly he requested information on the way the free and informed consent of indigenous peoples was obtained prior to the initiation of commercial activities on their lands.

15. **Mr. Neuman**, pointing out that the replies to the list of issues had not addressed paragraph 22 on that list, said that the Committee still wished to know what measures had been taken to prevent or punish the use of bribes by politicians to induce favourable coverage by journalists. He underscored the importance of ensuring the effective investigation of those who ordered acts of violence against journalists.

16. He enquired whether the Government supported Senate Bill 2344 which sought to decriminalize libel. He also understood that in September 2012 the State party had enacted a law on cybercrime which covered libel on the Internet and provided for prison sentences ranging from 6 to 12 years for the perpetration of that crime. He believed that the Supreme Court had suspended the enforcement of that law pending a review of its constitutionality.

The contrast between that situation and the more favourable position regarding freedom of speech, as outlined in the replies to the list of issues, raised the question whether such severe penalties were consistent with the State party's commitment to freedom of expression. He drew the delegation's attention to the Committee's general comment No. 34 which ought to have informed Philippine cybercrime legislation.

17. Finally, with regard to paragraph 23 of the list of issues, he pointed out that the prohibition on foreign workers joining a trade union unless their country of origin allowed Filipinos to become trade union members was totally inconsistent with the Covenant. Why had the Government not ensured the immediate repeal of that law?

*The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and resumed at 11 a.m.*

18. **Mr. Marquez** (Philippines), expanding on the answers which he had provided at the previous meeting on the relationship between constitutional law, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and sharia, said that the crucial question was which of those sources of law should prevail in the Philippines and whether the values of equality and non-discrimination embodied in its Constitution and the Covenant should take precedence over sharia. Questions about doctrine, philosophy and religion were difficult issues. The Philippine Supreme Court had never had to decide a case turning on the points raised by the Committee members in that context. As a matter of principle, the Philippine Constitution, as the fundamental law of the land, took precedence over sharia. Any law which was contrary to the Constitution could be challenged and struck down by the Supreme Court. The Philippines was a secular State, not a religious State or an Islamic State. It allowed freedom of religion. As a result, even its sharia courts were, like all other courts, under the supervision of the Supreme Court. Any legal dispute therefore had to be resolved in a manner consistent with the Constitution.

19. The issue was not as simple as it sounded, however. Equality, non-discrimination and freedom of religion were all values protected by the Constitution, but striking a balance between those values was a difficult matter. It had been claimed that Islamic law was essentially a divine law with a validity of its own which was quite distinct from that of any human legislature or judiciary. The Philippines recognized and respected that branch of law, including sharia, under the freedom of religion clause in the Constitution. When determining whether sharia could curtail equality and non-discrimination, it would be necessary carefully to examine the alleged discriminatory practice at issue in its entire social context. A Muslim would argue that the perceived inequality in sharia was more apparent than real, because the principles of Islam also advocated equality and justice. The current Code of Muslim Personal Laws was a limited version of sharia. The presumption was that the Code was consistent with the Philippine Constitution.

20. The Peace Agreement signed on 15 October 2012 sought to expand the application of sharia which, like the country's civil law, was evolving. Any examination of the matter of underage marriages, polygamy and prearranged marriages would have to take into consideration the nature and form of Islamic marriages, as well as the fact that, in Islamic law, marriage was not regarded as a sacrament as it was in the Roman Catholic faith, but rested entirely on a contract. It had been argued that human rights had to be viewed in the proper social context and that the position of women under sharia had to be considered in its entirety, because the Constitution gave them more favourable treatment than non-Muslims in certain situations.

21. Technically it was possible for a Muslim woman to elect not to be covered by the provisions of sharia and invoke constitutional equality. A Muslim woman could go to the Supreme Court and file a petition to that end. It was, however, questionable whether a Muslim woman would actually take such action and go against her religious beliefs. If a

non-Muslim persuaded or induced her to adopt such a course, would the non-Muslim not be desecrating her religion? Would that not constitute a violation of religious freedom?

22. Allowing a person to choose to be governed by the provisions of sharia law would not necessarily signify that the State party was in effect suspending constitutional equality. The equal protection clause of the Constitution did not require the universal application of the laws to all persons without distinction. It simply required equality among the same group of persons according to a valid classification. The latter could not be predicated on superficial differences; it had to pass the test of reasonableness, rest on substantive distinctions and be germane to the purpose of the law. The Philippine Constitution expressly guaranteed the equality of men and women before the law, subject to reasonable classification.

23. Unfortunately there were no timelines for the definite establishment of regular family courts, since that depended on the allocation of State resources by Congress. The Supreme Court, which exercised administrative supervision over all courts in the country, had ensured that the 114 courts designated as family courts had adequate capacity and it was continuing to monitor the number of family cases nationwide. If more family courts were needed, the Office of the Court Administrator would recommend the designation of additional ones. Such recommendations would normally be approved by the Supreme Court. The Philippine Judicial Academy already held regular seminars to build the capacity of judges in the specially designated family courts and it would continue to do so for the benefit of the judges of regular family courts once they had been established.

24. The main reason for the delay in the disposition of cases was the lack of courts. In the more than 30 years since the adoption of the courts the Court Organization Act of 1980, individual pieces of legislation had created only one or two new courts. While no comprehensive legislation had yet been passed on the rationalization of courts and the creation of new courts, a bill on that subject had passed its third reading in Congress and it was hoped that it would become law by the end of 2012. Under an interim remedy, the Enhanced Justice on Wheels programme, some 6,000 persons had been released from pretrial detention and some 15,000 civil cases had been settled in the previous three or four years.

25. Another reason for the delay in the disposition of cases was the 25 per cent vacancy rate in the court system. The screening and nomination procedure conducted by the Judicial and Bar Council for filling such vacancies was lengthy and was currently being reviewed. As it stood, three nominations were required for each vacancy, but as there was a shortage of applicants in some regions, that requirement was not always met and a submission was therefore not made for each vacancy.

26. The Rules of Court in the Philippines also contributed to the delay in the disposition of cases, and were therefore subject to ongoing revision by the Supreme Court's rules committee. A small claims procedure had been introduced in the first level courts in 2009, under which the number of hearings was limited, the parties represented themselves, and judgements were final, all of which was intended to expedite the process. Following the introduction of the judicial affidavit rule in January 2013, witnesses would no longer give direct testimony on the stand, but would submit judicial affidavits before the trial and be cross-examined in court if necessary, resulting in almost two thirds of proceedings being expedited. The use of mediation and other alternative dispute settlement methods had also been expanded as part of the ongoing shift from an adversarial to an inquisitorial system.

27. The judiciary took seriously all allegations of corruption within its ranks. It had always encouraged litigants and members of the public to report any irregularities in the courts, and even anonymous complaints were followed up. In 2011, the Supreme Court had imposed disciplinary measures on 59 judges and 45 Supreme Court employees, and had

disbarred 4 lawyers. The judiciary's commitment to ethical practices was reflected in its adherence to the Integrity Pledge, a private sector initiative aimed at combating corruption. The Supreme Court was also considering the possibility of increasing the salaries of members of the judiciary and court personnel as a measure to curb corruption.

28. **Mr. Montenegro** (Philippines) said that the Government had intensified efforts to deal with the proliferation of "loose" firearms – those not licensed to private individuals or issued to the security forces. The Philippine National Police had a comprehensive firearms control programme which included promotion of responsible gun ownership; lobbying for additional legislation prescribing stiffer penalties for the smuggling, manufacture, sale and distribution of firearms; and operations to curb smuggling through coordination among law enforcement agencies and intelligence operations to identify points of entry.

29. On the issue of arrests, he said that the security forces adhered to the laws and police operational procedures, which provided that all arrests should be made only on the basis of a valid arrest warrant issued by the competent authority, except in instances where the law allowed warrantless arrest. No violence or unnecessary force should be used in making an arrest.

30. He stated that the allegations regarding the *Alsa Lumad* group were untrue; the Government did not allow vigilantism, much less the arming of vigilante groups.

31. **Mr. Libay** (Philippines), responding to the question on two specific murders, said that in the case of Father Tentorio four suspects had been charged with murder in February 2012. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to conduct a forensic examination of the late priest's cell phones and laptop due to the prohibition under canon law.

32. In respect of the killing of Jimmy Liguyon, he said that a preliminary murder investigation had been opened in March 2012. A warrant for the suspect's arrest had been issued in April 2012, and the National Police were currently conducting a manhunt.

33. Some of the systems, policies and procedures being developed by the National Police to investigate major killings had been initiated under the 2009–2011 European Union-Philippines Justice Support Programme; they included digital forensic examination and facial composite illustration. The development of human resources, including through nationwide training on crime scene forensics, and infrastructure, including a number of databases, was also a priority.

34. **Ms. Villar** (Philippines), referring to measures taken to protect the rights of children in the event of an informal separation, said that the Department of Social Welfare and Development, together with the local council for the protection of children, was normally responsible for their welfare. Social workers first assessed the situation of the family, focusing on the best interests of the child. If neither parent was found capable of taking custody, the social worker was duty-bound to identify alternative care, prioritizing placement with relatives. If that was not possible, foster care and even adoption would be considered.

35. The Women's Empowerment and Development towards Gender Equality Plan included a subchapter on LGBT rights.

36. Responding to the question on the registration of foundlings, she said that the Department of Social Welfare and Development normally had jurisdiction over such cases. The first step was to attempt to locate the natural parents, failing which alternative parental care would be envisaged. Once the relevant formalities had been completed, a certificate would be issued stating that the child was legally available for adoption. Once an adoption was finalized, a birth certificate indicating the names of the adoptive parents was issued.

37. Regarding the anti-child pornography law, she said that it included a provision for the creation of an inter-agency council against child pornography to monitor implementation of the law, composed of representatives of various national government agencies and NGOs. The council had drawn up a strategic plan for 2011–2013, covering five key strategic areas: advocacy; enforcement, investigation and prosecution; victim assistance; monitoring; and partnership and resource management. The council would conduct a midterm review by the end of 2012 as well as a final evaluation.

38. **Ms. Valderrama** (Philippines) said that the process of defining hazardous work was guided in particular by International Labour Organization Convention 182, and the list of hazardous occupations had been finalized following extensive multi-sectoral dialogue. The Government implemented the Programme against Child Labour through a network of social partners, and the main strategies were prevention, protection, removal and reintegration. However, the Government acknowledged that there had been an increase in the number of children working, and was therefore renewing its efforts in that area. Among the new initiatives being implemented was a campaign for “child labour-free *barangay* (villages)”, which involved awareness-raising and mobilizing public support. Reintegration support was also provided in the form of educational assistance and livelihood assistance to the families of former child labourers.

39. Responding to the question on the labour inspectorate, she said that 40,000 establishments were covered annually under the regular inspectorate programme, and the Government had recently ordered a significant increase in the number of labour inspectors to strengthen the enforcement mechanism. Under the Department of Labour’s new voluntary compliance programme, a seal of excellence was issued to companies that did not employ child labour or use products or services produced by contractors and subcontractors engaging child labour. Her delegation would provide the Committee with the 2011 report of the National Statistics Office on child labour.

40. With respect to the Committee’s recommendation for the repeal of the prohibition on foreign workers joining or forming trade unions unless there was a reciprocal agreement with their countries of origin, she said that the Government was currently in the process of reviewing the relevant articles of the Labour Code.

41. **Ms. Vigo** (Philippines), referring to the prevention of child labour, said that a system of local councils for the protection of children was in place to monitor the situation of children and protect them from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Those councils were composed of the village head, community health workers, teachers and NGO representatives, among others, and were actively supported by the Government.

42. On the issue of birth registration, she said that proactive steps were being taken by local government units and other partners to increase the rate of birth registration, for example through mobile birth registration teams visiting remote communities and the waiving of fees for late registration of births.

43. **Ms. De Lima** (Philippines), responding to the question on why prostitution had not been covered in the law on decriminalizing vagrancy, said that, although the Philippine Commission on Women and other advocates had fought for its inclusion, the Congress had considered prostitution and vagrancy to constitute two different offences; as the Constitution provided that a bill should consider only a single subject matter, it had decided to deal with prostitution separately. The bill on the decriminalization of prostitution was still pending.

44. With regard to maternal mortality from abortion, she said that abortion was a crime punishable under the Penal Code and there was no law explicitly authorizing abortion to save the mother’s life. However, there were proposals to liberalize the law to cover

situations where the mother's life was at risk in recognition of the fundamental precept of the Constitution on the protection of the life of both the mother and the unborn.

45. Torture was a criminal offence under domestic legislation, including the Constitution and the 2009 Anti-Torture Act. Having ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and enacted the Anti-Torture Act, the Government considered that there were sufficient mechanisms in place to prevent torture in the Philippines. While the national preventive mechanism had yet to become operational, the Commission on Human Rights already conducted regular inspections of detention facilities and military camps in order to prevent torture. Other agencies also carried out regular visits to detention facilities. Under section 8 of the Anti-Torture Act, any confession, admission or statement obtained under torture was inadmissible as evidence in all proceedings, except when used as evidence against a person accused of committing an act of torture. The Commission on Human Rights was currently consolidating all the statistical data that had been collected on complaints of alleged cases of torture. Once that process had been completed, the data that had been requested on places of detention and numbers of detainees would be submitted to the Committee in writing.

46. Under article 125 of the Revised Penal Code, persons caught in flagrante delicto could be arrested without a warrant and held in pretrial detention for between 12 and 36 hours, depending on the seriousness of the offence. While those rules were respected for the most part, there might be violations in isolated cases, particularly regarding the number of hours a detainee could be held before being referred to a prosecutor. In a small number of cases in the past, detainees awaiting conviction had spent a longer period in prison than the sentence they ultimately received owing to delays in the judicial procedure. In order to tackle prison overcrowding, convicted prisoners were being moved from the national prison facilities to regional prisons, more use was being made of bail for pretrial detainees, and bills were currently pending on the use of alternative forms of punishment, such as community service, for less serious offences.

47. All the rights enshrined in the Constitution were protected under the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, reached between the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The list of rights included in the Agreement was preceded by an explanation that those rights were upheld in addition to the basic rights already enjoyed under the Constitution, which covered the entire country. The rights highlighted in the Agreement included the right of women to meaningful political participation and protection from all forms of violence, to equal opportunities and non-discrimination in social and economic activities.

48. The Philippines was a country of origin, destination and transit for human trafficking, and internal trafficking took place in her country. However, the Inter-agency Council Against Trafficking was now held up as a model for anti-trafficking campaigns in other South-East Asian countries. As a result of successes in tackling human trafficking over the previous two years, the Philippines had been removed from the Tier 2 Watch List of countries in which the Governments did not comply with the minimum standards set by the United States of America in its Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act. It was currently at Tier 2 and expected to reach Tier 1 status. That was mainly due to the significant increase in the number of convictions for human trafficking, including convictions of perpetrators of illegal recruitment. The Government would submit disaggregated data on trafficking to the Committee. The national and regional task forces and those posted at the major airports had proved effective in detecting victims of trafficking. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 provided that immigration personnel could conduct secondary inspections to identify possible trafficking victims among departing passengers, particularly women and children. Those measures had caused

some controversy, given their potential for violating the right to freedom of movement, but the Supreme Court had confirmed their legitimacy in the fight against human trafficking.

49. Despite the controversy surrounding the recent enactment of the Cybercrime Prevention Act, the Government was convinced of its legitimacy, given the abuses that could be perpetrated in cyberspace, particularly by organized criminal gangs. Some 15 petitions had been filed against the Act before the Supreme Court, which had issued a 120-day temporary restraining order preventing the implementation of the Act during that period. Given that such a measure was rare, the Government surmised that the 120-day period was probably intended to allow Congress to introduce the necessary amendments to the Act. The controversy had stemmed mainly from the fact that the Act ran counter to the current trend towards decriminalizing libel by making libel a cybercrime punishable by up to 12 years in jail. The Executive supported efforts to abolish jail terms for acts of libel. Moreover, the Supreme Court had issued a circular advising against the imposition of prison terms for libel, and advocating instead the imposition of fines.

50. The surveillance of political dissidents did not form a part of the counter-insurgency plan, “Oplan Bayanihan”. That plan aimed to garner support from communities for the programmes and efforts of the military. There had been a paradigm shift from active combat operations to peace initiatives in the community, which was the essence of “Oplan Bayanihan”. There might have been a few reported incidents of killings of anti-mining advocates, but such killings did not constitute a Government policy. The Government encouraged openness and freedom in the advocacy of important issues in the country. It had not yet been established whether the killing of Father Tentorio had any link with his advocacy of anti-mining rights; investigators were looking into other theories, including links to a local politician and business interests.

51. Homosexuality had never been criminalized in the Philippines. There was, however, significant social prejudice against the LGBT community. The 2010 landmark Supreme Court ruling overturning the decision by the Elections Commission to deny accreditation to the Ang Ladlad LGBT party had demonstrated the deplorable attitudes held by several commissioners. The Government was disseminating that decision in order to promote respect for the rights of all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

52. **Sir Nigel Rodley** asked whether individuals had the right to change their religion in the State party. He drew attention to article 18 of the Covenant, which provided that everyone should have the right to have or adopt a religion or belief of his choice. Moreover, the Committee’s general comment No. 22 explicitly indicated that that right necessarily entailed the freedom to choose a religion or belief, including the right to replace one’s current religion or belief with another or to adopt atheistic views, as well as the right to retain one’s religion or belief. It was important that personal choice in that context was given precedence over the religion or belief.

53. He requested clarification of the meaning of the term “basic rights” in the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, given that the rights listed in the Agreement appeared to be basic rights that were enshrined in the Constitution. It would be useful to know whether there were any constitutional rights that were not covered by the Agreement.

54. **Mr. Neuman** noted that the Committee’s concern about decriminalizing libel did not mean that it advocated the deregulation of libel; the issue was whether libel should be examined in a criminal or civil law context. He requested clarification of whether the Supreme Court had abolished prison terms for acts of libel, or merely issued a circular in 2008 expressing a preference for imposing fines rather than imprisonment.

55. **Ms. De Lima** (Philippines) said that the Supreme Court could not abolish imprisonment for libel as that punishment was still provided by law; the Supreme Court could only interpret the law. The matter would have to be brought before Congress in order

to amend the law. Replying to Sir Nigel Rodley, she said that the rights listed in the Framework Agreement had been singled out merely to highlight them. The list was not exhaustive.

56. **Mr. Marquez** (Philippines) said that all persons were free to choose their religion in the Philippines. That right included the freedom to change one's religion.

57. **Ms. De Lima** (Philippines) thanked the Committee for the fruitful and constructive dialogue; its concluding observations would receive serious consideration from her Government.

58. Civil and political rights were vital to her country, as they formed the fabric of a democratic, free society. With its vibrant civil society and media, there was diverse and lively debate on all issues in the country. The Philippines continued to be at the forefront of discussions on human rights in regional and international forums. The current Administration was committed to complying with its obligations under the Covenant and to enhancing measures to secure wider and more effective promotion and protection of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all Filipinos. The President's 16-point agenda on good governance, combating corruption and inclusive economic growth, known as his Social Contract with the Filipino People, made respect for human rights its key focus. While it still faced significant challenges, her country would continue to work towards strengthening the protection of all the fundamental human rights in the Covenant.

59. **The Chairperson** commended the State party for its efforts to bring domestic legislation into line with its international obligations under the Covenant and several other positive developments, notably the signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro. However, the Committee still had many concerns, including the status of the Covenant in the domestic legal framework, the lack of mechanisms to implement its Views adopted under the individual complaints procedure, the lack of fiscal autonomy of the Commission on Human Rights, the lack of a definition of terrorism in the Human Security Act, the persistence of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, the proliferation of private armies and vigilante groups, the poor access to reproductive health services for women and girls, the high rate of maternal mortality and the absolute ban on abortion, the impact of Muslim personal laws on the enjoyment of human rights, especially for women, the security services, corruption in the judiciary, pretrial detention, prison overcrowding and the high rates of child labour. Taking note of the State party's commitment to upholding the rule of law and protecting human rights, especially under the current Administration, she urged the Government to take the necessary measures to implement the Committee's recommendations.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*