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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Fifty-fifth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 21st meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 1 June 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Sadi

Contents

Opening of the session

Adoption of the agenda

Substantive issues arising in the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic,
Social and Cultural Rights

*Submissions by national human rights institutions and non-governmental
organizations*

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chairperson** said that there had been many events and developments since the Committee's last meeting, not least the April 2015 earthquake in Nepal, which had claimed thousands of lives, and the migrant crises in South-East Asia and the Mediterranean. In late May 2015, a meeting of the World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa had been held on the shores of the Dead Sea in Jordan. Sadly, although several of the issues covered had been of relevance to the Committee, he had been left with the impression that the participants were either unaware of the Committee's existence or had failed to consider the Covenant during the course of their discussions. The meeting had served as a reminder of one of the Committee's biggest challenges, which was to enhance the visibility of the Covenant, give it practical value and ensure that it was taken into account by policymakers in their deliberations.

2. **Mr. Heenan** (Human Rights Treaties Division, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that he wished to begin by referring to three examples of the Committee's contribution to the progressive development of international law. The first was the upcoming day of general discussion on the draft general comment on the right to just and favourable conditions of work, as set forth in article 7 of the Covenant, which came at a time when workers' rights were high on the global agenda and when austerity measures and globalization were constraining the enjoyment of those rights. The second was the Committee's statement on social protection floors, which reinforced work done by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. The third, and perhaps most important, was the Committee's consideration of communications submitted under the Optional Protocol to the Covenant, which built up the Committee's jurisprudence and brought greater clarity to the scope of application of Covenant rights.

3. Since the entry into force of the Optional Protocol in 2013, there had been a slow but steady increase in support for the communications procedure. During the recent meeting of the Group of Friends of the Optional Protocol, which spanned all five United Nations regional groups, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had underscored the importance of the Optional Protocol in reaffirming the indivisibility and interrelatedness of all human rights by bridging the gap between the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the two Covenants would take place in 2016, and he looked forward to discussing proposals as to how to mark that highly significant event.

4. The implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system was well under way. It was a pleasure to see how much progress the Committee had made in reducing the backlog of reports pending consideration, thanks to a combination of greater efficiency and additional meeting time. Nevertheless, more needed to be done to support States parties that had not yet submitted a report to the Committee or were late in doing so. With that in mind, OHCHR had started up a programme to assist States parties in building their institutional capacity.

5. The Committee was encouraged to further the harmonization of the treaty bodies' working methods with regard to such issues as developing the role of focal points or rapporteurs on reprisals. That question would be on the agenda of the meeting of chairpersons to be held in San José, Costa Rica, from 22 to 26 June 2015. Given that the meeting would take place immediately after the Committee's session, any reflections on the issue would be particularly welcome.

6. **The Chairperson** said that it was his sad duty to report the death of Mr. Yuri Kolosov, a bright and active former member of the Committee who would be greatly missed. A message expressing the Committee's sincere condolences would be sent in due course.

7. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim** said that he would like to join the Chairperson in paying tribute to Mr. Kolosov. He suggested that the Committee might wish to issue statements on the earthquake in Nepal and the recent deaths of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. The Covenant was an integral part of international law, and strong political will on the part of all stakeholders was needed in order to ensure its full implementation.

Adoption of the agenda (E/C.12/55/1)

8. *The agenda was adopted.*

The meeting was suspended at 10.20 a.m. and resumed at 10.25 a.m.

Substantive issues arising in the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Submissions by national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations

Kyrgyzstan

9. **Mr. Amanbaev** (Ombudsman of Kyrgyzstan), presenting the alternative report submitted to the Committee by the Ombudsman's Office, said that it was a testament to the growing importance placed on the protection and promotion of economic, social and cultural rights by national human rights institutions.

10. The functional and financial independence of the Office had not yet been secured, and the Ombudsman Act was not fully in conformity with the Paris Principles or the Constitution of Kyrgyzstan. A bill that would amend the law had been submitted to parliament in January 2014, but no action on it had yet been taken. The human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan had deteriorated, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, whose access to effective remedies and basic services was limited. Moreover, a bill which, if passed into law, would require civil society organizations that received funding from abroad to register as "foreign agents" threatened to aggravate the situation.

11. Factors contributing to human rights violations in Kyrgyzstan included: insufficient monitoring of medical practitioners, which sometimes made it difficult for patients to secure compensation for substandard care; the fact that private companies were not held accountable for the environmental damage they caused; problems in ensuring the availability of adequate housing; and the existence of a large shadow economy, poor working conditions and a shortage of labour inspectors. It was unfortunate that the Government had not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as, in Kyrgyzstan, such persons typically suffered from poorer health and had lower levels of educational attainment and higher poverty rates.

12. **Mr. Kabak** (Open Viewpoint Public Foundation) said that the Act on Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations prohibited the involvement or participation of children in religious organizations and regulated the distribution of religious literature and other materials, which was not in conformity with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Pursuant to the Kyrgyz Constitution, there was no official State religion and all religious groups should be treated equally, but there had been instances of discrimination against certain religious groups when they had attempted to set up religious schools. Efforts should therefore be directed towards ensuring that persons and groups were

not discriminated against on religious grounds. National awareness-raising campaigns on religious diversity would be one step in that direction.

13. **Ms. Baijumanova** (Civil Partner Platform Central Asia on the Move) said that Kyrgyz and foreign migrant workers faced numerous difficulties in the country, and existing legislation provided insufficient protection for migrants. Complete information on identity document application procedures was not readily available, and many internal migrants were unable to register in their place of residence owing to strict residency regulations, which limited their access to health care, education, justice and formal-sector employment. Children of internal migrants were in a particularly vulnerable situation. Kyrgyz migrants in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan faced similar difficulties, and many ended up working illegally owing to the high cost of obtaining official residency status. They, too, had limited access to health care, education and housing. It was therefore hoped that the Committee would urge the Kyrgyz Government to streamline its birth and residency registration processes and simplify passport application procedures. In addition, it would be helpful if pre-departure training programmes that covered employment issues and the pension and health-care systems were made available to migrant workers so that they would know what their rights were upon arrival in their country of destination. The Government should consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights so that Kyrgyz citizens could bring cases involving violations of the Covenant before the Committee.

14. **Mr. de Vries** (Netherlands Helsinki Committee) said that the social, economic and cultural rights of some groups in Kyrgyzstan were not being fully upheld. The share of social benefits being channelled to low-income families with children and families with children with disabilities continued to dwindle owing, among other factors, to the State's focus on placing those children in boarding schools and its failure to improve the birth registration process. Some of the country's vulnerable children were engaged in the worst forms of child labour and were subject to domestic violence and violence in State-run institutions. Maternal mortality rates remained high, and access to sexual and reproductive health care was limited. Persons with disabilities often had difficulties in gaining access to education, health care and rehabilitation services. The Government should therefore be encouraged to develop programmes in cooperation with civil society that upheld the rights of those groups and take steps to raise the awareness of law enforcement officers, judges and social workers of the Covenant's provisions. It should also consider ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

15. **Ms. Boobekova** (Soros Foundation) said that the National Housing Code and housing regulations needed to be brought into line with the Constitution in order to uphold the right to adequate housing. A sustainable, affordable housing policy that reflected the recommendations of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing was also needed, as was a housing development fund for low-income persons. Steps had to be taken to prevent forced evictions and to develop a national strategy for reducing homelessness. Consideration should be given to the possibility of establishing a specialized prosecutions unit to process individual complaints of violations of housing laws.

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

16. **Ms. León** (Asociación Venezolana para una Educación Sexual Alternativa (AVESA)), speaking on behalf of AVESA, CEPAZ, Asociación Género, Democracia y Derechos Humanos (GENDHU) and FREYA, said that the Venezuelan Government's gender equality policies had failed to address the issues of poverty and women's lack of access to equal employment opportunities, social security and health care. Early pregnancy, maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS rates among women remained high. Because formal-sector job opportunities were in such short supply, women found themselves in highly

vulnerable situations, and many were living in extreme poverty. It was therefore hoped that the Committee would urge the Government to adopt progressive economic measures and promote gender equality in all areas. It would also be helpful for the Government to provide disaggregated statistics on the amount of resources allocated to upholding women's economic, social and cultural rights.

17. **Mr. Uzcátegui** (Venezuelan Programme of Education and Action in Human Rights (PROVEA)) said that the current political and economic situation in the country was incompatible with the maintenance of an adequate standard of living, and the progress made towards greater social inclusion between 1999 and 2012 had been rolled back by regressive, ineffective economic policies. Those policies, combined with a lack of public information about the situation in the country and attempts to silence human rights defenders and civil society, had driven up poverty and inflation rates. There had been numerous instances in which the Government had not fulfilled its obligations under the Covenant. Examples included the fact that there was no national public health system that was accessible to all members of the public and the failure to consult and obtain the prior consent of indigenous communities before conducting mining or other resource extraction activities on their territories.

18. **Ms. Hernández** (National Federation of Parents and Legal Guardians Association (FENASOPADRES), Asociación Civil Asamblea de Educación and Padres Organizados de Venezuela) said that, by attempting to adapt the education system to the socialist production model and to incorporate socialist values into school curricula, the Government was in breach of article 13, paragraph 1, of the Covenant. The State had also further weakened the independence of Venezuelan universities by extending its control over student intake. By failing to provide a comprehensive, quality education, the State was also failing to fulfil its obligations under article 13, paragraph 2, of the Covenant. That failure was reflected in dwindling public school enrolment rates and a rise in private school attendance, shortcomings in the school meals programme, a high illiteracy rate and a lack of mechanisms for assessing the quality of education.

19. The Government had unilaterally replaced legitimate parents and students associations with partisan bodies, limited parents' freedom of choice in relation to the education of their children and restricted the participation of students in school affairs. It was hoped that the Committee would urge the Government to take the following actions: prohibit political activities in primary educational institutions, remove political propaganda from school curricula and textbooks, and prohibit the provision of military training to children and adolescents; ensure that the right to education was enjoyed by all, that teaching staff were well-trained and adequately paid, and that schools were properly equipped; stop undermining the independence of the universities; provide information on public education management policies, budgets and indicators; support the work of parents and legal guardians associations; and repeal resolution No. 058 and replace it with safeguards for freedom of association for parents, students and teachers and for the right to educational freedom and freedom of thought.

20. **Mr. Valencia** (Coalition of Organizations for the Right to Life and Health (CODEVIDA)) said that access to basic health care was limited. Public health-care services, on which over 60 per cent of the population depended, had deteriorated, and many Venezuelans, including public officials, had therefore turned to the private sector for health care. Both sectors were experiencing serious shortages of medicines and medical supplies, however. A plan for the restoration of public health and social welfare services across the country was therefore needed. That plan should include specific targets and deadlines and should be developed in cooperation with health professionals, patients and their families, civil society organizations, international human rights bodies and regional agencies. A flexible and transparent funding system should be put in place to ensure that public and

private health centres and pharmacies had uninterrupted access to sufficient quantities of medicines and medical supplies and equipment. In addition, the legitimate rights of people suffering from health conditions needed to be protected by providing channels for the filing of legal claims and by permitting people to engage in peaceful protests when their right to health was violated.

21. **Ms. Montiel** (Cacique Waikae'puru Indigenous Front) said that the authorities had done a great deal to combat discrimination against indigenous peoples and Afro-Venezuelans. The Government worked unceasingly to ensure compliance with international treaties, and the Indigenous Peoples and Communities Act ensured that indigenous persons enjoyed the right to pension benefits and the right to found a family. That law also made provision for making training in disease prevention available to young people in indigenous communities. In addition, a number of indigenous professionals had completed postgraduate studies in Cuba. The right of indigenous communities to use traditional medicine and healing practices had been incorporated into the wider health-care and social security system, and a number of health programmes focusing specifically on indigenous persons had been set up. The Government had also built houses for members of indigenous communities living in extreme poverty and had thus greatly improved their living conditions.

22. **Mr. González** (Fundación Latinoamericana por los Derechos Humanos y el Desarrollo Social (FUNDALATIN), Instituto de Desarrollo Humano y Economía Social (IDHES), Red Nacional de Derechos Humanos (RENADDHH)) said that enrolment rates for early childhood, primary and secondary education were extremely high, but it was nonetheless vital to continue to implement existing education policies. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela ranked highly in terms of enrolment in higher education. However, the Government should extend the existing university quota system in order to further broaden access to education. It was hoped that the Committee would encourage the State party to expand the coverage of the school meals programme as part of its effort to put an end to poverty. Over the past 12 years, over 20 million tons of foodstuffs had been distributed to 21 million persons, and food was subsidized by the Government. However, staple foods were often in short supply owing to black-marketeering, and it would be helpful for the Government to provide information on its efforts to tackle both that problem and the prevailing culture of impunity in that regard.

23. The organizations on whose behalf he was speaking would like to ask the Committee to urge the Government to strengthen civil society's participation in the sphere of health care, update the 1998 Health Act, increase funding for the *Bases de Misiones* poverty eradication programme, provide information on its efforts to combat the black market in medicines (in particular, antiretrovirals) and report on the situation and number of patients awaiting elective surgery.

24. **Mr. Guanipa** (Confederación Bolivariana Indígena de Venezuela (CONBIVE)) said that the Bolivarian Revolution had brought with it significant advances in terms of human rights and the participation of indigenous peoples. Efforts had been made to promote the indigenous philosophy of *Buen Vivir* (good living) by improving the quality of people's lives, increasing life expectancy, building a fair, democratic and sustainable economic system, and strengthening national sovereignty and the nation's integration into the wider world. The Government had launched the *Misión Guaicaipuro* housing programme for indigenous persons along with a number of social programmes. It should never be forgotten that the indigenous peoples of the Americas had been subjected to genocide, invasion and looting on a vast scale and that their land and natural resources had been stolen from them by the forces of colonialism and imperialism. More must be done to ensure that indigenous women could lead dignified lives and to strengthen their role in society, as well as to promote botanical research for medical purposes, expedite the demarcation of the lands of

indigenous communities and incorporate traditional indigenous knowledge into the education system.

25. **Ms. Zambrano** (Consejo Nacional para la Defensa del Derecho Humano de la Salud) said that obesity was currently a major issue in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The authorities should regulate publicity campaigns for junk food and should promote healthy alternatives. She hoped that the Committee would urge the Government to develop preventive health policies to tackle the problems of high blood pressure and diabetes. The renovation of hospitals was one of the lines of action that was needed in order to help reduce the maternal mortality rate. Doctors must be trained to identify cases of maternal violence, and steps should be taken to speed up the adoption of laws on natural childbirth and the preservation of related indigenous traditions. There was a need to speed up efforts to reform the national health plan and to update the provisions of the Health Act dealing with free health care. Lastly, she would like to ask the Committee to call on the Government to do more to tackle the organized criminal groups involved in the black market in medical supplies.

26. **Ms. Swan** (Human Rights Watch) said that the lack of access to essential medicines and medical supplies in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela gave cause for alarm. The Government was not currently meeting its international obligations in that regard, which was putting the lives and health of tens of thousands of Venezuelan citizens at risk. There were particularly serious shortages of painkillers, medicines required for the treatment of asthma, high blood pressure, diabetes and heart conditions, and syringes, needles and gauze dressings. Almost half of all operating theatres were currently closed, and the vast majority of laboratories did not have sufficient supplies of reagents to run basic tests. Hospitals lacked medicines and supplies, and most of the items included on the World Health Organization (WHO) Model List of Essential Medicines were not available at pharmacies. Those shortages were the direct result of government policies. Most medicines were obtained chiefly from private suppliers, but such transactions had become increasingly difficult to carry out owing to exchange rate and price control regulations. While Human Rights Watch did not dispute the Government's authority to regulate its currency or the prices of goods sold in the country, the authorities had to ensure that those kinds of regulations did not interfere with the accessibility of essential medicines and medical supplies.

Mongolia

27. **Ms. Victoria Lee** (International Disabilities Alliance) said that Mongolia continued to assess degrees of disability using a welfare-based medical model, and legal provisions placed greater emphasis on welfare than on rights. Persons with disabilities were classified as having a certain percentage of working capacity, and many of those persons were barred from work entirely, whereas, in reality, the workplace could instead be adapted to accommodate their needs. Less than 20 per cent of all persons with disabilities of working age were employed. There were only six schools for disabled children in Mongolia, all located in the city of Ulan Bator. As a result of the economic crisis, entitlements and services for persons with disabilities had begun to be cut, including, for example, publications in Braille.

28. No data were available on the prevalence of violence against persons with disabilities. A survey funded by WHO had found that nearly half of all women with disabilities had been sexually assaulted and more than a third of those women had not reported the abuse. No training was provided to health services staff on appropriate ways to interact with persons with disabilities who were victims of violence, and there were no shelters, hotlines or complaints mechanisms. Services for persons with disabilities were the

responsibility of the Ministry of Population, Development and Social Welfare, rather than being mainstreamed into all government ministries.

29. **Ms. Nolan** (Kaleidoscope Human Rights Foundation, LGBT Centre of Mongolia, Youth for Health Centre) said that the Government of Mongolia should be commended for its efforts to advance the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community in that country, but work in the areas of law, regulation and policy remained to be done in order for Mongolia to meet its obligations under the Covenant. Five main recommendations were developed more fully in the report submitted by the organization on whose behalf she was speaking: (1) to combat discrimination and violence on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and to expedite the enactment of legislation under which such discrimination would be unlawful; (2) to put in place mandatory training programmes for all health professionals with a view to increasing their understanding of the specific health needs of LGBTI people; (3) to broaden the scope of health insurance schemes to cover transition-related health services for transgender people and in vitro fertilization for lesbian and bisexual women; (4) to introduce legislation protecting the rights of same-sex couples, including parenting rights; and (5) to implement policies to address bullying and discrimination against LGBTI children in schools.

Thailand

30. **Ms. Bergman** (Cross-Cultural Foundation) said that she and two of her countrywomen would read a joint statement prepared by a group of Thai civil society organizations that had presented alternative reports to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Those organizations were the Cross-Cultural Foundation, the Human Rights and Development Foundation, the Thailand Indigenous Education Network, the People's Empowerment Foundation, the Justice for Peace Foundation, the Community Resources Centre, the Centre for Protection and Revival of Local Community Rights, the Highland Peoples Task Force, the Indigenous Education Network, the Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand, the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, Protection International, Franciscans International, Forum Asia and the International Commission of Jurists. The statement and alternative reports sought to provide an overview of the deteriorating situation in Thailand.

31. Under the national reforestation programme, army and forestry officials had been evicting people from lands that they had settled and cutting down trees that they had planted; over 44 urgent requests had been received by the National Human Rights Commission from communities threatened with expulsion. Laws had been amended to allow corporations to exploit those lands for gain. The Government should repeal Decrees Nos. 64/2014 and 66/2014, which authorized local officers to destroy crops and evict local communities from their land without due notice. Since May 2014, martial law had been used as a tool to seize land from individuals and communities without paying compensation. Many land rights activists had been killed or had disappeared in the last decade. Human rights advocates seeking to protect the right of self-determination as applied to natural resources had been the target of night raids by gunmen, extrajudicial killings, death threats, defamation lawsuits and harassment campaigns. In addition, the newly introduced Assembly Act placed restrictions on civil and political rights. Communities were excluded from decision-making processes, while mining, gas and coal projects were being launched. Over 800,000 families were now landless, and a study had shown that 90 per cent of the land deeds in Thailand were in the hands of just 50 individuals and legal persons.

32. **Ms. Neelapaijit** (Working Group for Justice and Peace), taking up the joint statement, said that the Government was weakening State human rights institutions. One example was the planned merger of the National Human Rights Commission and the Ombudsman's Office. The southern border provinces of Thailand had been under martial

law since 2004; nearly 23,000 people in that region had been victims of physical violence, and almost 8,000 of them had died. Furthermore, families of persons arrested on national security grounds faced stigmatization; many women were heads of households, and the general state of insecurity placed psychological pressure on children. Every effort must be made to protect ethnic Malay Muslim women and to guarantee their right to justice in line with Security Council resolution No. 1325 of 2000. The Government should protect the rights of teachers and public health workers employed in conflict zones and provide access to health care for women, children and families. Child marriage, forced marriage and gender-based violence must be stopped. Despite ratification by Thailand of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, it remained legal to discriminate against women if it were deemed to be in the interest of national security or to be justified by religious or safety concerns.

33. **Ms. Tajaroensuk** (People's Empowerment Foundation), continuing with the joint statement, said that the countries of the region needed to reach a binding agreement for the protection of the Rohingya people from State-sponsored, systematic persecution. It was hoped that the Committee would seek clarification on how the recent regional summit on migration hosted by Thailand might result in meaningful action to bring an end to the persecution of Rohingya migrants, who were especially at risk of being sold into forced labour in the fishing industry. The rights of the indigenous peoples of Thailand had been violated repeatedly, and their means of subsistence had been threatened or destroyed outright.

34. Issues that she would like to urge the Committee to raise with the State party included the two Uighur-Turkish infants who were being held in immigration detention along with their mothers and the petition of the Pak Mun people to have the Pak Mun Dam opened to allow fish from the Mekong River into the Mun River to spawn. Education was a basic right and a vehicle for the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. The Thai Government should adopt the approach espoused in the publication entitled *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, which had been prepared by the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNICEF and should ratify the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education.

35. **Ms. Polkla** (Community Resource Centre, Northern Development Foundation, Thai Sea Watch Association, E-Sarn Human Rights and Peace Information Centre, Project for Campaign for Public Policy on Mineral Resources) said that experience had shown that most of the violations of Covenant rights that occurred in Thailand arose in relation to natural resource management and the environment. Thai laws on mining, forestry, land use, national parks and the environment needed to be amended in order to provide greater protection for human rights. Business projects were carried out, from beginning to end, without consulting the communities affected by them and without adhering to technological or pollution control standards. Many projects had transboundary and transnational impacts and, yet, there was no legislation in place that established the nature of the State's extraterritorial obligations. While in other areas laws that afforded protection for Covenant rights were in place, they were not strictly enforced.

36. **Ms. Ratjen** (International Commission of Jurists) said that the International Commission of Jurists shared concerns expressed by other civil society organizations about obstacles to the enjoyment of Covenant rights posed by the new institutional framework put in place following the military coup of May 2014. The interim Constitution that had been introduced gave the military Government sweeping, unchecked powers. The current legal system curbed the right to an effective remedy and impeded access to justice, thereby violating rights guaranteed under the Covenant. It also interfered with freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly, which in turn hampered the work of human rights advocates. The Commission was also concerned about the barriers to women's

enjoyment of equality and freedom from discrimination that had been erected. The lack of legal protection against gender discrimination and safeguards for migrant women, including migrant domestic workers, was a further cause of concern.

37. **Mr. Mancisidor** said that he would be interested in receiving further information on the issue of gender inequity in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela that had been raised by Ms. León; the logging projects carried out without prior consultations with the indigenous peoples concerned, which had been raised by Mr. Uzcátegui; the benefits made available to indigenous peoples that had been mentioned by Ms. Montiel; the provision of military training to minors that had been mentioned by Ms. Hernández; the lack of accessible health care for low-income persons discussed by Mr. Valencia; and the question of free universal education raised by Mr. González. He would also like to know what information sources had served as the basis for Mr. Uzcátegui's remarks about deepening poverty in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

38. **Mr. Kedzia** said that he wished to thank the Ombudsman of Kyrgyzstan for his enlightening statement. He would like to know what financial limitations had contributed to the fact that the Office of the Ombudsman had been rated as not being fully in compliance with the Paris Principles by the International Coordinating Committee (ICC) of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. He would also like to know more about the bill on foreign agents and whether non-governmental organizations had been consulted during its formulation.

39. **Mr. De Schutter** said that he would like to know how the amended legislation on forest reserves referred to in the joint statement of Thai civil society organizations was leading to forced evictions of people who depended on the land for their survival. He would also appreciate information about the nature of eviction procedures and whether there were safeguards in place to protect the rights of the people involved. He would be interested to hear any recommendations that those organizations might wish to make in that regard.

40. **Ms. Bras Gomes** said that she was interested in the comment made by Ms. Polkka about the extraterritorial obligations of Thailand as a member of ASEAN; more information would be welcome.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.