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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND PART (PUBLIC)* OF THE 24th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 26 March 2004, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. SMITH (Australia)

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* The summary record of the first part of the meeting appears as document
E/CN.4/2004/SR.24.

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The public part of the meeting was called to order at 4.25 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF PERU

1. Mr. RODRIGUEZ-CUADROS (Peru) said that during the 1990s his country had gone through a period of serious violence linked to terrorism. In August 2003 the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation had submitted its report on that violence. After holding numerous public hearings and obtaining the testimony of over 17,000 witnesses, it had managed to establish the identity of 32,000 victims out of over 69,000 dead or missing. Although terrorism had been the main cause of those deaths, State agents had also committed serious human rights violations, such as summary executions, enforced disappearances and acts of torture, during the period in question. The Peruvian courts had instituted criminal proceedings against Alberto Fujimori, former President of the Republic, on the grounds of his responsibility for those crimes against humanity, in particular in the Barrios Altos and University of Cantuta massacres. Accordingly, at the request of the Supreme Court, the Peruvian Government had submitted to the Japanese Government a request for Mr. Fujimori's extradition. As the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation had emphasized in its report, only Mr. Fujimori had had sufficient power to prevent those operations, which had been carried out by the "Colina Group" death squad, from being investigated or prosecuted.

2. States had an obligation to guarantee victims access to fair and efficient remedies. Hindering or denying access to justice meant granting impunity, which by its very essence was contrary to the fundamental norms and principles of human rights. Amnesty laws or refusals to extradite were among the methods used to maintain impunity. For example, the former President had approved two laws granting amnesty to the military personnel involved in the Barrios Altos and Cantuta cases, laws which had been invalidated by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. International law provided for four main ways of ensuring that the persons responsible for such practices were brought to justice: trial in the country where the acts had been committed; trial in national courts having international jurisdiction; trial in the International Criminal Court; and trial in special international courts. When national administrative or legal institutions were unwilling or incapable of bringing the required procedures to a successful conclusion, the obligations of States under international law and the imperative norms of jus cogens could be invoked to guarantee access to justice. Such recourse to the rules of international law became even more legitimate when the alleged perpetrators were former heads of State or Government. Numerous resolutions, decisions and recommendations of various United Nations treaty and non-treaty bodies affirmed that the extradition of perpetrators of serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity was vital to international cooperation in combating impunity. In its resolution 2001/22, the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights had clearly stated that States had an obligation to cooperate in the extradition of persons who had been found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including former heads of State or Government. In addition, the Special Rapporteur on the question of the impunity of perpetrators of violations of human rights had said that neither the political nature of the offence nor the principle of non-extradition of nationals could be invoked to avoid extradition for violations of international law.

3. The Peruvian Government and the Japanese Government had both ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. One of the crimes with which the Peruvian courts had charged Mr. Fujimori was having inflicted

pain and suffering on the victims of Barrios Altos in order to punish and intimidate them through the Colina Group, which constituted torture under article 1 of the Convention. The Peruvian authorities believed that refusing to extradite former President Fujimori on the basis of his alleged Japanese nationality was not legitimate. In fact, by receiving him as the head of a foreign State, the Japanese Government had itself recognized Mr. Fujimori's Peruvian nationality. In addition, invoking the nationality of an alleged perpetrator of serious human rights violations in order to shield him from justice was prohibited by the norms and principles of international law. In any case, no provision of international law prohibited the extradition of a national. Finally, in the absence of an extradition treaty between Peru and Japan, article 8 of the Convention against Torture stipulated that that instrument could be considered to constitute the legal basis for extradition.

4. The democratic Government of Peru demanded that justice should be rendered to the victims. At the same time, it guaranteed that former President Fujimori would have a fair trial and would enjoy due process of law. It was determined to use all available remedies to ensure access to justice and prevent impunity, in keeping with its international obligations. For that reason it had already decided to refer the matter to the International Criminal Court, if necessary.

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, INCLUDING:

- (a) QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CYPRUS (agenda item 9) (*continued*)
(E/CN.4/2004/118; E/CN.4/2004/G/25; E/CN.4/2004/NGO/5, 18, 53, 80, 91, 102, 118-120, 127, 143, 150, 157-181, 184, 190, 202, 203, 208, 213, 218, 228, 245, 254, 256 and 260; E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/SR.3, 4 and 5)

5. Mr. OZDEN (Centre Europe-Tiers monde) said that, owing to its weight and dominant position, the United States of America bore particular responsibility for the persistence of serious human rights violations. Following the attacks of 11 September 2001 in New York it had increased the number of restrictions on freedoms and unilateral actions taken in its own territory and abroad under the pretext of combating terrorism, in disregard of its international commitments. Some of the persons who had been arrested in Afghanistan were still imprisoned at Guantánamo, in flagrant violation of the principle of presumption of innocence and the right to a fair trial. Following the example set by the United States, other States, particularly States members of the European Union, were also going to extremes in the name of security, adopting anti-terrorism laws that increasingly restricted fundamental freedoms, thereby fostering an upsurge in racism and xenophobia and opening the door to inter-communal and social conflicts that were already apparent in several countries. Refugees, migrants and anti-globalists suffered the most from those measures.

6. The time had come to assess the various ways in which the war on terrorism was being conducted; that war had certainly increased distrust among peoples so that security had become the rule and served as a smokescreen to obscure the forcible imposition of an unfair social and international order and the widespread plundering of the planet's resources by a few Powers.

7. Ms. ASSAAD (International PEN) said that there were currently over 200 writers and journalists around the world who had been imprisoned simply for having made their opinions known in their writings and speeches. Many among them were detained in countries that were currently members of the Commission, countries in which they represented only a fraction of the total number of prisoners of conscience. In China, for example, more than 20 writers and journalists were still being held in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, while in Cuba more than 70 dissidents, 34 of whom were writers, journalists and librarians, had been arrested in April 2003 for subversion, owing to their alleged links with United States agents in Havana, and had been given exceptionally harsh prison sentences. Lastly, in Eritrea, more than 20 journalists and writers had been imprisoned since September 2001, officially for having attempted to avoid national service, although it was believed that their detentions were linked to their work for the independent press or, in some cases, for having published an open letter critical of the Government.

8. International PEN urged those members of the Commission to reconsider their policy of imprisoning anyone who expressed opinions that were contrary to those of the authorities, and to act in accordance with the principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

9. Mr. PINHEIRO (Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar), introducing his report (E/CN.4/2004/33) in the light of the information received after the report had been prepared, said first of all that he had been unable to visit Myanmar before the session of the Commission, but that the Myanmar authorities had agreed in principle to his next visit to that country, at a date to be determined. In that connection, he urged that all member States should follow the example set by the 49 States, of which only 19 were members of the Commission, that had extended standing invitations to those holding special mandates from the Commission. Such an invitation should be a basic requirement for becoming a member of the Commission.

10. In his report, he had highlighted civil and political rights in the context of the process of political transition and democratization. He had given an account of the events that had taken place on 30 May 2003 in Depayin, which had constituted a setback for human rights in Myanmar. According to the information provided by the Government, 151 of the 153 people who had been arrested following the events had been released. However, other sources indicated that there had been more than 250 arrests since 30 May 2003. He therefore appealed once again to the Myanmar authorities to release all those arrested on that date who were still in prison. In particular, he requested that the freedom of movement and political activity of Aung San Suu Kyi and three members of the Central Executive Committee of the National League for Democracy (NLD), U Tin Oo, U Aung Shwe and U Lwin, should be restored immediately.

11. The Prime Minister's announcement concerning the adoption of a road map in August 2003 had been acknowledged by some members of the international community as a positive initiative towards political transition. During his mission in November 2003 he had been given to understand that the 104 principles that had been elaborated by the preceding National Convention, which had been responsible for overseeing the drafting of a new Constitution, would be the starting point for the new Convention and that all political parties, including NLD, would be able to participate in the Convention on an equal footing. He had noted that while the Government had reconstituted the three bodies responsible for reconvening the National Convention, those bodies did not include any members of NLD or any other

political party, or any representatives of ethnic nationalities. He hoped that the Myanmar Government would soon make clear the commitments it had undertaken during the Forum on International Support for National Reconciliation in Myanmar the previous December in Bangkok with regard to the time frame for the National Convention and the list of all those who would be invited to participate in it. He also hoped to be able to report on the implementation of those commitments after his next visit.

12. To promote a genuine process of political transition to a democratic Government, a number of fundamental human rights requirements, which he had listed in paragraph 33 of his report, must be fulfilled. In addition, implementation of the road map must be accompanied by real and tangible changes on the ground and involve all political parties, ethnic groups and civil society in a truly transparent process. Political rights and freedoms must be respected in order to create an environment conducive to a democratic transition. The most urgent steps to be taken were: the lifting of all remaining restrictions on freedom of expression, movement, information, assembly and association; the repealing of the related “security” legislation; the reopening of NLD offices and the granting of permission to all the other political parties to open their offices. In that connection, he was disturbed by reports of arrests and convictions for political activities. For example, since his last visit, a group of students had allegedly been sentenced to terms of 7 to 17 years in prison for having distributed leaflets criticizing the road map and the National Convention. In addition, nine persons who had allegedly conspired to bomb official buildings and assassinate members of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), maintained contacts with exiled political groups and disseminated “false information” abroad using their contacts with the International Labour Organization (ILO) had been sentenced to death for treason.

13. He was also concerned about continuing allegations of human rights violations in ethnic minority regions, including Shan State. Despite his efforts to carry out his proposed independent assessment in that State, an agreement on the modalities he had proposed had still not been reached. He nevertheless welcomed the cooperation between the Myanmar authorities and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in ethnic minority regions and the authorization recently granted to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to visit Karen and Mon States and the Tenasserim Division along the country’s eastern border. The presence of UNHCR in those areas and the Office’s efforts to facilitate the return of refugees would contribute to the process of national reconciliation. He took note of the recent ILO mission to Myanmar to make a full evaluation of the situation in the country and to determine whether the conditions for the implementation of the joint Plan of Action that had been launched in May 2003 had been met.

14. He urged the Commission to act quickly to strengthen the credibility of its special procedures, but noted that recommendations to member States were useful only if the latter endeavoured to implement them effectively. He renewed his appeal to the Government of Myanmar to declare a general amnesty for political prisoners, which would greatly facilitate the process of national reconciliation. He was encouraged by the comments made by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Myanmar, who had visited the country from 1 to 4 May 2004, regarding the Prime Minister’s commitment to implementing the road map and ensuring that the process was as inclusive and transparent as possible. It should nevertheless be recalled that it was essential to place human rights at the centre of the political process.

15. Mr. THAN (Observer for Myanmar) noted with satisfaction that the oral presentation by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar was more positive than the report itself. While the report contained some omissions and inaccuracies, he welcomed the constructive approach taken by the Special Rapporteur. In his report the Special Rapporteur had mentioned a number of encouraging facts, including the Government's full cooperation during his mission, the release of five NLD members after almost six months of house arrest, the preparations for the reconvening of the National Convention and the setting of a timetable for the implementation of the road map. In his oral presentation, the Special Rapporteur had also welcomed the cooperation between the Myanmar authorities and ICRC in ethnic minority regions and the recent agreement concluded with UNHCR on access to Karen and Mon States and the Tenasserim Division.

16. On the other hand, his delegation believed that the Special Rapporteur had attached too much importance to the incidents of 30 May 2003. He pointed out that those incidents could have been avoided had Aung San Suu Kyi acted in good faith and cooperated with the authorities who had warned her against visiting the Depayin region, and emphasized that there had been no premeditation on the part of the Government. As for the allegations of religious intolerance, he affirmed that religious tolerance was one of the hallmarks of Myanmar culture, and there was no discrimination on the basis of religion. With regard to the two persons who had been sentenced by the Yangon district court as a result of their contacts with ILO, he said that the case had been clarified during the 289th session of the ILO Governing Body. Under no circumstances could a citizen's contacts or cooperation with ILO, the United Nations or any other international organization constitute a criminal offence; on the contrary, Myanmar welcomed such cooperation. In conclusion, his delegation hoped that the positive evaluation of the situation in a number of areas would be adequately reflected in the draft resolution on Myanmar.

17. Mr. DA ROCHA PARANHOS (Brazil) said that special rapporteurs played a significant role in promoting, defending and protecting human rights because they made direct assessments of specific situations. Accordingly, in 2001 the Brazilian Government had invited all the special rapporteurs of the Commission to come to Brazil, and in 2003 it had received two of them as well as one independent expert. Those visits, of which he hoped there would be more in the future, helped the country evaluate the human rights situation, prevent human rights violations and improve its policies in the field of human rights. Brazil had often stated that it disapproved of the politicization of human rights and supported an objective, cooperative, gradual and non-selective approach to human rights issues. That was the approach that the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar had taken in his report. His independence was to be commended, as was the importance he attached to the interdependence of all human rights. In his report the Special Rapporteur discussed the political and civil measures taken by the Government, as well as the Government's cooperation with international organizations. The Government of Myanmar had been very cooperative, and he had been able to meet freely with all the people he had wished to see and to go wherever he wished, which enhanced the credibility of the report. It was to be hoped that more and more countries would open their doors to special rapporteurs.

18. Mr. BECHARD (Observer for Canada) thanked the Special Rapporteur for his detailed report and said that he would like to know the status of the independent inquiry into the allegations of rape by the army in Shan State and how the State Council for Peace and Development (SPDC) had reacted to the proposal to conduct an independent inquiry into the incident that had taken place on 30 May 2003.

19. Moreover, given the numerous violations that had occurred during the previous National Convention, he wondered whether the Special Rapporteur thought that SPDC and the National Convention committees were sufficiently committed to letting their members participate in a significant way in the preparation of the new Constitution.

20. Mr. VIGNY (Observer for Switzerland) asked the Special Rapporteur to explain in concrete terms how he viewed the proposed link between the road map and human rights, and whether that link would take the form of a code of conduct for the Government of Myanmar, a memorandum of understanding, a special human rights advisor or another form. With regard to the modalities of the mission for an independent assessment of Shan State, he said that if agreement on the issue could not be reached quickly, he would like to know whether the Special Rapporteur had in mind any other ways of evaluating the serious allegations of systematic rapes in that region; he wondered, for example, whether he thought that Shan refugee women could be interviewed.

21. Mr. GIBBONS (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union welcomed the report of the Special Rapporteur and hoped that he would soon be able to return to Myanmar to continue his work. In view of the fact that SPDC planned to convene a new National Convention to draw up a new Constitution, he wondered whether the Special Rapporteur thought that he could help with the drafting of that text by proposing wording relating to human rights principles that might possibly reflect the experience acquired in the region. It would be useful to know whether the conditions of detention of political prisoners had improved since the Special Rapporteur's most recent visit to Myanmar in November 2003 and, in particular, whether prisoners had the right to receive visits. Since many of those prisoners were elderly and ill, he wondered what else could be done to facilitate their release.

22. Mr. PINHEIRO (Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar) said that, with regard to allegations of sexual violence in Shan State and the incident in Depayin, he had submitted to the Myanmar authorities a proposal setting out the modalities of a detailed inquiry, which was still under consideration. If the authorities rejected his proposals, an international commission of inquiry would have to be established, which would be a more difficult task. It would be best for the friends of Myanmar to persuade the Government that the two inquiries should be conducted within the framework of the Special Rapporteur's mandate. As to the National Convention and the road map, he hoped that Myanmar's Prime Minister would respect his commitment to implement them.

23. With regard to the need to incorporate human rights elements into the road map, mentioned by the observer for Switzerland, he did not believe that imposing a programme on the Myanmar authorities fell within his mandate. It must be recalled that all political transitions since 1946 had followed certain basic principles and that, in order to succeed, the Myanmar authorities would have to do the same; that decision, however, was theirs. The democracies present at the Bangkok meeting could make suggestions to the Government of Myanmar on how

human rights principles might be incorporated into the Constitution. The existence of a special representative of the Secretary-General would be sufficient in that regard. He did not think that the conditions of detention of political prisoners had deteriorated since the visit by ICRC. Torture was not practised, and elderly prisoners received the medicine they needed, but he continued to request the Myanmar authorities to release them.

24. Ms. MOTOC (Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) paid a tribute to the late Sergio Vieira de Mello, some of whose initiatives and concrete proposals were reflected in her report (E/CN.4/2004/34). In 2003 she had undertaken three missions to the Democratic Republic of the Congo during which she had met with the highest State authorities and members of civil society and representatives of United Nations agencies. She had visited many regions to study the situation there and had also gone to The Hague, where she had spoken with the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. She had also submitted a report to the General Assembly (A/58/534). Remarkable political progress had been achieved in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2003. Following the signing of the Final Act of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Sun City on 2 April 2003, the Transitional Constitution had been promulgated on 4 April 2003. The memorandum establishing an integrated army had been the last important stage before the formation of the Transitional Government on 30 June 2003. However, much remained to be done in terms of the key elements for the success of the peace process, such as the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants, the effective restructuring and integration of the armed forces of the former Congolese belligerents, the setting up of a Supreme Defence Council and the establishment of an integrated national police.

25. The year 2003 had been marked by massive human rights violations, which she considered international crimes; those violations had been considerably reduced between September and December, owing to the renewed mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). However, the attacks against civilians in Ituri on 6 October 2003 and 15 January 2004, as well as against MONUC, which had played a fundamental role in the progress achieved, were to be deplored. She paid a tribute to the memory of the observers who had died in the exercise of their mandate.

26. Since the completion of the report, various bills on civil institutions had been adopted, except for those concerning the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was nevertheless a positive development. It appeared, however, that the bill on the Congolese Human Rights Monitoring Centre, which had been adopted by the National Assembly, had been amended and no longer set out the conditions for ensuring the independence and impartiality of its members.

27. Only a just solution to the problems of impunity and reconciliation could bring lasting peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the national level, there had been problems with reconciliation, owing to difficulties linked to the adoption of the bill on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She believed that it was in the interest of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to refer the matter to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, in accordance with article 14 of the Rome Statute. An effective justice mechanism, such as the commission of inquiry or of experts that Mr. Vieira de Mello had proposed, should be set up so that crimes committed prior to July 2002 would not go unpunished.

28. Other problems requiring urgent attention included: the extremely difficult situation of the 3.4 million internally displaced persons; deficiencies in the administration of justice; and the vulnerability of certain groups within the population, particularly child soldiers subjected to ill-treatment and torture, women rape victims, persons with AIDS and the poor. She therefore recommended that all parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should halt their military activity and respect the rights of women and that the Transitional Government should apply the Constitution, take the necessary steps to end impunity, reinstate the moratorium on the death penalty and put an end to discrimination against indigenous peoples. The international community should continue to provide assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and become more involved, particularly in the protection of human rights.

29. Mr. MUTOMB MUJING (Observer for the Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that, after having met with various groups of people and visited all the places she wished with complete freedom, the Special Rapporteur had painted a picture that was fairly consistent with reality and had prepared an overall positive and balanced report. The Democratic Republic of the Congo had made remarkable progress in various areas related to the promotion and protection of human rights. In the political sphere, it had promulgated the Transitional Constitution on 4 April 2003, which provided, inter alia, for the establishment of five national pro-democracy institutions: the Independent Electoral Commission, the National Human Rights Monitoring Agency, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Anti-Corruption and Ethics Commission and the High Authority for the Media. With regard to the process of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration, the Transitional Government had spared no effort in helping MONUC repatriate foreign combatants who were on Congolese territory, and it expected the international community to provide adequate support in order to speed up that process. The restructuring and integration of the army and national police were under way, as was the formation of integrated and unified brigades. The first brigade, composed of 900 troops, would soon be deployed in Ituri.

30. The massive human rights violations referred to by the Special Rapporteur mostly concerned territories where the authority of the State had not yet been completely restored and where uncontrolled armed groups held sway. The establishment of a reunified territorial administration in the near future would be accompanied by the deployment of units of the armed forces and the national police in order to ensure public order and the security of persons and their property. The problem of insecurity among the civilian population, mentioned by the Special Rapporteur, might thus be solved.

31. Genuine reconciliation inevitably involved justice in the form of reparations for victims. For that reason the Congolese population placed all its hopes on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In order to combat impunity, the Democratic Republic of the Congo supported the Special Rapporteur's proposal for enhanced coordination of international institutions dealing with that question through the allocation of adequate logistical and material resources. That proposal was also in line with Security Council resolution 1468 (2003).

32. The issue of refugees still needed to be resolved. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was among the countries hosting the largest number of refugees on its territory, and hundreds of thousands of its nationals were refugees abroad. In addition, the country had more than 3 million internally displaced persons, and their resettlement posed enormous problems.

33. Aware that the existence of an independent judicial system was an indispensable condition for the realization of human rights, the Government had initiated, with assistance from the European Union, a comprehensive reform of its judicial system, which would be based on an audit and the establishment of new military and commercial courts. The new Military Penal Code punished crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. In order to improve prison conditions, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was requesting much more extensive technical cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and, to that end, an increase in the operational budget of its office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Democratic Republic of the Congo thus hoped to receive technical assistance in the field of human rights.

34. With regard to vulnerable groups, the social rehabilitation of child soldiers was facilitated by the national demobilization and reintegration programme, while women victims of violence were being cared for under the inter-agency multisectoral programme to combat and prevent sexual violence that had been jointly introduced by the Government, United Nations partners and NGOs. Indigenous peoples, or pygmies, were not socially marginalized, contrary to the allegations made by the Special Rapporteur.

35. In conclusion, he said that the peace process under way in his country was irreversible, and he invited the international community to support his Government's efforts in order to strengthen that process so that it might lead to free, democratic and transparent elections in June 2005.

36. Mr. VIGNY (Observer for Switzerland) asked what type of judicial mechanism should be set up to deal with crimes committed before July 2002, the date of entry into force of the Rome Statute, which the Democratic Republic of the Congo had ratified, in order for it to be fully effective.

37. Ms. MOTOC (Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that the problem of impunity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was most disturbing; justice must be rendered to the victims of violations, living or dead, and to their families. Since it had not been possible to undertake the joint mission of three Special Rapporteurs that had been proposed in 1997, the Commission had replaced that mission with a commission of inquiry. All the proposals that had been made were in line with the establishment of a justice mechanism in conformity with Security Council resolution 1468 (2003). Such a mechanism could take the form of a mixed court involving the United Nations and the international community, the aim of which would be to help the courts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo put an end to impunity for crimes committed before July 2002.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

38. Mr. TEKLE (Eritrea) said that the representative of International PEN had deliberately attempted to mislead the Commission. He knew perfectly well that the journalists arrested and imprisoned in Eritrea had been so for having tried to avoid national service. It was clearly stated

in paragraphs 2, 3 and 7 of article 25 of the Eritrean Constitution that all citizens had an obligation to be ready to defend the country, to perform national service and to abide by the law. National service was compulsory in Eritrea, including for journalists, and exemptions were granted only to heads of families.

39. Mr. ANDO (Japan), referring to the comments made by the Peruvian Minister for Foreign Affairs concerning the status of Mr. Fujimori, said that the issue was currently under careful consideration.

ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE SESSION (agenda item 3)

40. The CHAIRPERSON said that a serious incident had taken place during the meeting the previous day. The interpretation into English of the statement made by the Ambassador of the Congo on behalf of the Group of African States and a number of Arab States had been extremely inaccurate. He apologized to the Ambassador of the Congo on behalf of the Secretariat and asked that an accurate English version of the latter's statement should be distributed as soon as possible. The expanded bureau would meet with the Chief of the Interpretation Service to seek clarifications in order to prevent such incidents from recurring.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.