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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 25th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 29 March 2004, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. SMITH (Australia)

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

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.4/2004/28 and Add.1, 29-31, 32 and Corr.1, 33-35, 36 and Add.1 and 118; E/CN.4/2004/G/25; E/CN.4/2004/NGO/5, 18, 53, 80, 91, 102, 118-120, 127, 143, 150, 157-176, 180, 181, 184, 190, 202, 203, 208, 213, 218, 228, 245, 254, 256 and 260; E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/SR.3-5)

1. Mr. ROSSI (International Religious Liberty Association) said that, in the current climate of international terrorism and religious extremism, education had a key role to play in teaching children about understanding, peace, tolerance and friendship among all peoples and ethnic, national and religious groups. It was most unfortunate that France, a country in the vanguard of human rights promotion, had recently adopted a law contrary to the notion of educating pupils in State schools with respect for pluralism and diversity. The law prohibiting the wearing of religious symbols such as the Islamic veil, the Jewish skullcap or the Christian cross was in direct contradiction with general comment 22, of the Human Rights Committee concerning freedom of religion and, by banning pupils who wore such religious symbols from attending State school, it also violated the right to education. Children were therefore being taught about exclusion, not acceptance; in the process, France had introduced a new kind of secularism - one that did not respect religion. The Commission should urge France to respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those involved in education.

2. Mr. MORA SECADE (Centro de Estudios Europeos) said that, while pressure from the United States Government had resulted in the human rights situation in Cuba being put on the Commission's agenda, the people and Government of Cuba had always resisted attempts at neo-colonial domination by the world's superpower. The true dissidents were not those on the payroll of the United States Government, but Cubans who had opposed neo-liberal globalization, the use of force and a dominant, unilateral approach in international relations, preventive wars, structural adjustment policies, the pillaging of developing countries through external debt and the unjust international economic order. Despite a 40-year blockade, the Cuban revolution had shown that resistance was possible, and that with determination, the unfair rules of the game could be changed. The positions adopted by the European Union (EU) towards Cuba since 1996 and that of the Commission had served, in practice, to strengthen the United States blockade, thus threatening the sovereignty and national interests of the Cuban people. They, however, demanded the right to develop the economic, political and social systems they had freely chosen, and the right to self-determination, independence and sovereignty. Those rights would never be negotiable, since they formed the basis of all other rights and fundamental freedoms, and the Cuban people would continue to defend them.

3. Mr. KHAN ARSHAD MEHMOOD (World Peace Council) said that, while the international community had welcomed the recent peace initiatives between Pakistan and India, negotiations would only succeed if the systemic failures that had undermined democracy and human rights in Pakistan were effectively reversed. Pakistan remained a dangerously unstable country, largely due to the military's domination of the political situation, which adversely

affected the rights of the people. The previous 50 years had seen the steady encroachment of the military on the cabinet, parliament, civil services and the judiciary, which were extremely underdeveloped as a result. The military's scant respect for the basic principles of good governance had influenced other institutions, and, as a consequence, the rule of law was hardly respected, equality, social justice, gender equality and minority rights were not promoted and regional imbalances remained.

4. The Pakistani military had refused to make a strategic break with the forces of sectarianism and fundamentalism. Alleged ruptures with such forces had been purely tactical, since the army and the intelligence had maintained covert links with extremist Islamic groups in the hope of manipulating them in order to further their own domestic and foreign policy agendas in future. The Commission should endeavour to facilitate the transformation of Pakistan into a democratic and secular State that respected human rights and fundamental freedoms, promoted the well-being of its citizens and contributed positively to regional and international peace and security.

5. Mr. GALLAGHER (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists) said that, since it had first fought for the abolition of slavery 150 years previously, the Adventist Church had always supported human rights. Seventh-day Adventists, defending the universal right to choose one's beliefs according to individual conscience and to practise and teach religion freely, without discrimination, and respecting the equal rights of others, condemned the use of force to impose religious conformity as contrary to God's principles. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a fundamental document that stood firmly for human dignity, liberty, equality and non-discrimination of minorities, and article 18, defending religious freedom, was particularly important as that right underpinned all others. Despite significant progress in many countries, however, those rights had often been violated. The Adventist Church urged the United Nations, government authorities, religious leaders, believers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to work consistently for the implementation of that Declaration. In so doing, they would help reduce the alarming increase in violent religious extremism, intolerance, hate crimes and discrimination based on religion or anti-religious secularism in many parts of the world, as noted by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief (E/CN.4/2003/66, paras. 130 and 131). The Adventist Church was concerned for those who had been the subject of religious-based persecution, whether initiated or condoned by the State, in totalitarian regimes or countries where a religious majority sought to exercise civil power to the detriment of others. It therefore supported human rights projects that strove to provide the fundamental freedoms that were increasingly under threat.

6. Ms. PERSSON (International Save the Children Alliance) said that, with almost half the population of Afghanistan under 18 years of age, the combination of poverty, acute drought, decades of civil war and internal strife had had a profoundly negative impact on the lives of Afghan children and young people. Violations of human rights had continued, despite the political and administrative changes that had been introduced by the Government to improve the country's security. The National and Constitutional Loya Jirgas had been major steps in the nation-building process, and a children's consultation scheme had been organized along similar lines to those bodies with the help of Save the Children. The adoption of a new Constitution in December 2003 had been an essential step in ensuring fundamental rights for all citizens and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission had been instrumental in promoting children's rights there.

7. Two decades of war and displacement had, however, created great instability and insecurity for Afghan children and young people, particularly girls. Human rights abuses against them frequently went unreported, and despite programmes for the demobilization and disarming of child soldiers, no psychological rehabilitation had been provided for them, and their reintegration into the community had been poor. Education had been a primary concern of all children, but despite efforts to re-establish schools, drop out rates had remained high, with only 3 per cent of girls completing their schooling.

8. At a time when the new Constitution was to be interpreted and a human rights agenda formulated, specific measures were needed to address the current needs of children and young people: States and United Nations agencies should provide assistance to promote quality basic education accessible to all children, recommend extension of the mandate of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission beyond June 2004 and the strengthening of its capacity to promote and monitor compliance with children's rights, and encourage the Independent expert on Afghanistan to include children's rights in the reports to the Commission and the General Assembly. Those recommendations should be followed up at the forthcoming donor conference in Berlin.

9. Mr. SWEENEY (South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre) said that the ruling Lao People's Revolutionary Party had continued to evade international scrutiny of its human rights record, which ranked among the most repressive in Asia. The Constitution did not acknowledge any adherence to international law, and permitted the limiting of all constitutional freedoms by decree. Any manifestation of anti-Government propaganda, information or opinion incurred a sentence of up to five years, and the law prescribed administrative detention for up to one year without charge or trial. There was no freedom of expression or association, and religious and ethnic minorities were frequently persecuted. The ruling party had been actively involved in the persecution of the Hmong minority, reportedly including summary executions and disappearances, and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) had expressed grave concern over the serious and repeated human rights violations against that ethnic group. Other violations of human rights included arbitrary detention without trial for up to 10 years, torture, corruption, appalling sanitation and lack of access to medication. The Commission should support CERD and appoint a country rapporteur to investigate those violations.

10. Mr. VALDÉS (American Association of Jurists) said that several lawyers sentenced to long periods of imprisonment under the anti-terrorist laws during the Fujimori Government were still in prison in Peru, despite the fact that those laws and the respective sentences had been declared null and void.

11. Over 600 people, including children, held in the Guantánamo concentration camp for the past two years enjoyed none of the rights and guarantees prescribed by the Geneva Conventions or international law or indeed those laid down in the United States Constitution. Taking into consideration the material conditions in which they were held, that constituted cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and the prisoners were hostages of the superpower.

12. There was an unknown number of American and foreign detainees in the United States, whose names the authorities refused to supply, and many of whom had been in prison for over two years. Few of them had been charged with a crime, and none enjoyed the rights prescribed

by the Constitution or international law. According to the Government, they were “enemy combatants”, a term with no legal standing. On 18 December 2003, a New York judge had ruled that the President did not have the right to detain indefinitely an American citizen, José Padilla, on that basis. The Government had appealed against that decision and the Supreme Court ruling was awaited. Whilst the declaration by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention that several of the detentions in Guantánamo and the United States were arbitrary was positive, much more had to be done since those were not isolated cases but formed a consistent pattern of gross human rights violations, and the Commission should authorize the relevant rapporteurs to investigate them immediately.

13. Mr. MANSAGO (World Alliance of Reformed Churches) said that the Commission’s recent decision to discontinue consideration of the human rights situation in Equatorial Guinea had come after 23 years of continual monitoring of the systematic and unpunished violation of those rights. No significant progress had been made in that time, as had been evident from the rapporteurs’ reports from 1979 to 2002, and the concerns the latest rapporteur had brought to the Commission’s attention regarding President Obiang’s autocracy were still relevant. His regime continued to kill, kidnap, torture and mistreat citizens, detain them for ideological reasons, prevent free elections and lie to the international community. The people of Equatorial Guinea, who were suffering State terrorism, had no way of bringing about peaceful regime change. The United Nations and the international community were therefore wrong to allow the dictator Obiang to act with impunity. The Commission should put the situation in Equatorial Guinea back on the agenda and appoint a Special Rapporteur for that country.

14. Mr. KEYTA (Society for Threatened Peoples) said that China had attempted to deflect international criticism regarding its policy in Tibet by releasing several high-profile political prisoners shortly before the sixtieth session of the Commission. Despite that ploy the United States had drawn attention to the plight of the Tibetans at the recent high-level segment. While many other human rights issues in China remained a cause for concern, including the death penalty, the treatment of dissidents, freedom of religion, the use of arbitrary detention and torture and freedom of expression, the situation in Tibet was the result of racial and cultural discrimination and religious intolerance. Lobsang Dhondup had been summarily executed on 26 January 2003 after a closed trial for alleged involvement in a series of bombings. Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche, a respected Buddhist scholar in Tibet, had been sentenced to death with a two-year suspension for a crime he had not committed. Despite growing international concern, it was feared that he could be executed in December 2004. The Commission should encourage China to allow all its thematic special rapporteurs, government monitoring agencies, journalists and NGOs to visit Tibet freely, and urge it to release all prisoners of conscience, including Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche and Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the world’s youngest political prisoner.

15. Mr. YASSIN (North-South XXI) said that, as a Lebanese citizen, he had led a peaceful life until his village had suffered a savage occupation, during which he and his family had been displaced and hundreds of young people imprisoned. He had joined the Lebanese resistance in order to defend his homeland and his people, in accordance with the rights enshrined in several international conventions. He had been taken prisoner on 16 September 1987 and had been tortured, beaten all over his body and left in the open air for hours on end. He had been

interrogated for three months, and during that time had been denied sleep and sunlight. He had been forced to stand for many hours, splashed with water and left outside, sometimes until midnight. A representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who had visited him had been moved to tears, as the visit had followed a session of harsh torture.

16. He had been sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment by the Israeli courts and had been released on 29 January 2004, during a prisoner exchange between Hizbullah and Israel. The Israeli authorities, while claiming to be guided by democratic principles, had confiscated his private diary and personal papers, including messages he had received from friends and ICRC while in detention. During his 17 years in prison, he had witnessed gross violations of human rights, including hostage-taking and the death of Palestinians through torture.

17. His comrade Samir Al-Kantar, who had been detained for 26 years, had been excluded from the exchange operation in 2004 in order to be kept as a hostage. He urged the Commission and the entire international community to call for the release of Mr. Al-Kantar and all the Arab detainees, to investigate the cases of those who had disappeared and to find the corpses of those who had been martyred.

18. Mr. ARENDE (Lutheran World Federation) said that while the majority of the refugees living in seven refugee camps in eastern Nepal wished to return to the homes from which they had been forced to flee in the early 1990s, over 100,000 people were still there. A verification process undertaken by an official joint Bhutanese/Nepalese team in one of the camps between March 2001 and June 2003, while it had been conducted without the participation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), had concluded that over 70 per cent of the refugees had the right to return to Bhutan. Almost a year later, not one refugee had been allowed to go home and Bhutan had repeatedly refused to allow UNHCR to fulfil its role in the verification process, or to monitor a future repatriation exercise. Since that body had announced its forthcoming withdrawal from the camps, the refugees faced an uncertain future amidst the worsening security situation in the region and had no prospect of a just and durable solution to their plight. The Commission should voice its concern over the matter and encourage Bhutan and Nepal to redouble their efforts to resolve the crisis. The wider international community should be urged to help bring an end to the protracted denial of the refugees' rights.

19. The situation in Haiti was also of great concern, as the persistent insecurity there had led to many violations of human rights. The permanent humanitarian emergency and the underlying issues should be addressed in order to ensure future democracy and development in Haiti. That would require substantial strengthening of the technical cooperation offered by the Independent expert and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and implementation of the relevant thematic special procedures by the Commission.

20. Mr. MUMTAZ KHAN (European Union of Public Relations) said that, while the Government of Pakistan had advocated human rights and the right to self-determination, it had practised institutionalized violation of the basic human rights of the people under its control in the region of Jammu and Kashmir. Their right to freedom of expression, and the right to elect their own representatives had been denied under the Constitution of Pakistan. In Gilgit and

Baltistan, which were home to over 1.5 million people and had been artificially separated from the rest of Jammu and Kashmir and absorbed into Pakistani territory, extreme repression had been used to impose Pakistani rule. The people there had become victims of religious and sectarian violence, drugs and arms trafficking and economic exploitation. In not restoring that area to the rest of Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan had failed to abide by the decisions of its own judiciary and its international obligations towards the United Nations Security Council. The Commission should examine the human rights situations in the whole area which remained under the illegal control of Pakistan.

21. Mr. MANHAS (Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization) said that several States, such as Pakistan, had armed, trained and financed violent, extremist groups that had no compunction in maiming and killing innocent civilians and destroying their property. While the effects of those covert policies had been felt the world over, it had become clear that Karachi, Quetta and Rawalpindi themselves were not immune to the havoc wreaked by such organizations. The peace process between India and Pakistan had begun, but countries such as Pakistan would need to show determination to stay the course of reconciliation and dialogue. The best way to demonstrate their commitment to upholding democracy, the rule of law and human rights would be to make a clean break with the forces of terrorism, extremism and religious intolerance with which they had made unprincipled alliances of convenience in the past. The Commission should ensure its work made an impact on States, such as Pakistan, that had been reluctant to end their alliance with terror, so that the people of South Asia could solve the more pressing problems of poverty, hunger and disease.

22. Mr. WAREHAM (International Association against Torture) said that the United States and the Group of Western European and Other States acted as if they were not subject to the same rules of international law and norms as other Member States. Yet, the United States was guilty of violations in every sphere of human rights.

23. For example, the Bush Administration had shamelessly exploited the events of 11 September 2001, fanning the flames of racism and xenophobia, to implement an agenda of restriction of civil liberties in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Furthermore, the United States had recently sanctioned Israel's extrajudicial execution of Sheikh Yassin and forced the removal of President Aristide of Haiti. In 2002, it had underwritten the failed attempt to overthrow Venezuela's President Chavez and for 40 years had used every possible clandestine method in its attempts to assassinate Cuba's President Castro. It was holding prisoners of war at Guantánamo Naval Base in violation of all international norms and had sanctioned Zimbabwe for having exercised the right to self-determination by returning stolen land to its rightful owners.

24. The conclusion to be drawn was that, despite the Vienna Declaration, there continued to be two standards of human rights in the Commission: one for the developed world and another for the developing. The United States should be held accountable for its violations, beginning with the adoption of a resolution condemning it for its role in the overthrow of President Aristide of Haiti and one calling for the appointment of a special rapporteur to examine the situation in the United States.

25. Ms. AMADOR (Federation of Cuban Women) expressed concern that the Commission had become an instrument of political manipulation that reflected the hypocrisy and selectivity of powerful countries. If equal importance was attached to all human rights, the United States Government would be placed at the top of the list of violators. Over 52 million people were illiterate in the United States and over 40 million did not have access to health services, yet millions of dollars were being spent on electoral campaigns and on the production of weapons.

26. The EU also applied double standards. Its spokesperson, the representative of Ireland, had expressed concern about the human rights situation in many developing countries, yet had failed to mention the serious problems that existed in the EU.

27. It was disappointing that the representatives of certain Latin American countries, where human rights were systematically denied, had taken the floor simply to justify their servile attitude.

28. Despite its hardships, which had been compounded by the 45-year commercial and financial blockade against it, Cuba had proved able to guarantee equal rights to all persons, regardless of race, sex or ideology. The human rights violations that took place in Cuba were not attributable to the revolution; they were constituted by instruments such as the illegal blockade against Cuba, the Torricelli Amendment and the Helms-Burton Law, all of which were the work of the Government of the United States in collaboration with Miami-based anti-Cuban terrorist groups. A member of one of those groups had even been sent to represent the United States at the Commission.

29. Mr. CASTILLO BARROSO (Movimiento Cubano por la Paz y la Soberanía de los Pueblos) said the fact that the United States Department of State had placed Cuba on its list of countries promoting or harbouring terrorism illustrated the extent to which defamation and cynicism formed part of the policy of the current United States administration. It was conceivable that the current administration would consider a military campaign against Cuba in order to boost its flagging electoral prospects. The biased report of the Personal Representative of the High Commissioner of Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Cuba (E/CN.4/2004/32) had been designed to create the conditions for the adoption of a resolution condemning Cuba and appeared to pave the way for military intervention.

30. For the past 45 years, Cuba had found itself involved in an undeclared war with the United States. The Commission would regain some of its credibility if it called for the release of the five Cubans who had been tried unfairly, subjected to physical and mental mistreatment and condemned to lengthy sentences in the United States.

31. Ms. ARIF (Liberation) said that, despite the 1997 peace accord between the Government of Bangladesh and the leaders of the indigenous Jumma people that had ended a 25-year-long armed conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, peace continued to be a distant reality in the region. Successive Governments in Bangladesh had failed to address the fact that the security forces and Bengali settlers continued to commit with impunity gross and widespread violations of human rights against the Jumma people.

32. The atrocities committed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region had been brought to the attention of the international community over the years. A high-profile delegation from the EU had recently conducted a visit to inspect a number of donor-funded projects in the region. Such visits served not only to highlight the desperate situation of the Jumma people but also challenged the Government to address the violence perpetrated by their own security forces and by Bengali settlers. Impunity was one of the main factors that contributed to human rights violations in Bangladesh. Until a judicial mechanism was established which allowed human rights violations to be addressed transparently and expeditiously, innocent people would continue to suffer.

33. Ms. KAO (Becket Fund for Religious Liberty) said that the Juma Mosque Community in Baku, Azerbaijan, was a staunchly independent and peaceful Muslim congregation that had decided not to register with the State-run Muslim Caucasus Board. Consequently, the Government of Azerbaijan had arrested the mosque's leader on unsupported charges of preaching anti-Government sermons. His trial had begun the previous week, after 115 days of pre-trial detention. The charges against him violated his freedoms of expression and religion under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

34. Furthermore, the Baku city authorities had received permission to confiscate the Juma Mosque. Such action would be in blatant contravention of the Community's rights of assembly and religion. A religious community's ability to engage in religious activities was meaningless without the security of being able to maintain a physical location to enjoy those rights.

35. Guarantees of religious freedom and assembly were not just for religions with influence. They were especially designed to protect minority and disfavoured religions, which could not secure their rights through ordinary democratic processes.

36. Ms. PARKER (International Educational Development) said that, although heightening the scrutiny of certain countries by means of a special rapporteur or special representative was one of the Commission's most effective mechanisms, that mechanism had been abused by the United States in regard to Cuba. The United States was interested only in advancing its own political agenda and had little concern for the people of Cuba. The human rights problems in Cuba were minor when compared to the problems in other countries. The United States' insistence for a review of Cuba was driven by a small group of Cuban-Americans living in Florida and was intended to ensure a Republican Party victory in Florida in the forthcoming presidential election. Furthermore, United States action against Cuba was virtually the only aspect of the Commission's work that was reported in the United States media, keeping the population of that country grossly misinformed.

37. Although thousands of persons were being detained in China simply for practising Falun Gong and many had died from torture, the Commission had not issued a resolution on the situation of human rights in China. Thousands of Tamil civilians had been killed by the Sri Lankan army during 20 years of armed conflict, yet the Commission had not addressed that issue since 1987. Ethnic cleansing, considered to be so bad in the former Yugoslavia as to require a special tribunal, did not even merit a condemning resolution in the case of Turkey. The Indian military forces had assassinated many political leaders, arrested and tortured thousands of others and raped many women in Indian-occupied Kashmir. Yet the Commission had not even asked the Security Council to implement its own resolutions regarding Kashmir.

38. The Commission should free itself from the political agenda of a few States. Heightened scrutiny should be limited to the worst situations determined by an objective and impartial evaluation. Instead of focusing on countries such as Cuba and Belarus, the Commission should be seeking to help people who needed it most, such as the population of Iraq.

39. Mr. PUNJABI (Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation) said that, despite growing human rights awareness and vigorous momentum towards the promotion and protection of human rights at the global level, there had been a phenomenal increase in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Democratic participation and social and economic empowerment at the grass-roots level remained a distant dream in many parts of the world. It was astounding that so many authoritarian States, which banned political parties and banished popular political leaders, claimed to be democracies. They needed to be identified and urged to restore democratic order in its normal and real form.

40. During the past decade and a half, there had been a rise in ethnic and religious tension in different parts of the world, largely as a result of popular aspirations for democratic participation and social and economic empowerment. Warring militant groups often resorted to claims that they belonged to separate sovereign enclaves, conveniently but erroneously invoking the right to self-determination and thereby undermining the significance of that right. Support for and opposition to such claims had always hinged on strategic and political considerations. It was essential to clarify the concept of self-determination.

41. Claims and subsequent actions for supremacy were shaking the very foundation of the human rights regime. In the recent past, covert and overt initiatives had been undertaken which appeared to be directed towards weakening the United Nations system. Fortunately, some countries had resisted those attempts. The international community should endeavour to strengthen the United Nations and its mechanisms for promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

42. Mr. CARDONA (World Federation of Trade Unions) said the people of Cuba had not only endured an unjust, criminal and immoral economic blockade for more than four decades; they were now being threatened in a way that violated their right to self-determination. At the previous session of the Commission, a decision had been taken by a slender majority to inquire into the situation of human rights in Cuba. The aim was to censure a social process that, precisely because it promoted human welfare, could serve as an example of how to achieve a better future for all and not just a few.

43. His organization objected to the continued use of selective and discriminatory treatment that created a pretext for the United States' policy of aggression towards Cuba. Not one single person had ever expressed concern to his organization about a disappeared person or death squad, extrajudicial executions, torture or brutal suppression of demonstrations in Cuba.

44. The members of the Commission should not lend their vote to fuel a campaign aimed at eroding the will of a people that had courageously shown themselves to be in favour of a society that, albeit imperfect, allowed for constant progress in favour of the majority interest. They should stand up against the dangerous campaign of isolation that might lead - given recent events - to a war of military aggression against Cuban workers.

45. Mr. BAGRIL (African Society of International and Comparative Law) expressed concern about the human rights situation in a number of African countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire, where armed conflict and social unrest had taken a heavy toll. He called on the Governments of those countries to implement reforms and to find peaceful solutions to their problems.

46. After facing many years of atrocities by Government forces, the indigenous communities of the Darfur region of Western Sudan had been forced to take up arms in self-defence, resulting in a civil war. The Government's indiscriminate aerial bombardment of civilian targets supported by ground assaults by its allied militia groups had been the main cause of humanitarian suffering in the region. In January 2004, there had allegedly been over 1 million internally displaced persons in Darfur and some 135,000 people had been forced into exile in Chad.

47. Following a two-day visit to Darfur in December 2003, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Humanitarian Needs in the Sudan had concluded that the humanitarian crisis had reached unprecedented proportions and that the denial of access was the single greatest impediment to humanitarian efforts in Darfur. The Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights had also expressed deep concern about the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in the region. The failure of the Sudan to comply with its obligations as a Member State and signatory of the major international human rights treaties warranted condemnation by the Commission.

48. Ms. NARTI (International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development) said that, shortly after declaring martial law in Aceh in May 2003, the Government of Indonesia had forbidden international NGOs and other agencies from entering the province. Despite Indonesia's ratification of the 1949 Geneva Convention, even ICRC had been denied access. As a result, it had been impossible to provide humanitarian assistance and to monitor the human rights situation in Aceh.

49. Local NGOs, however, had received information about 487 cases of torture, 439 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, 90 cases of forced or involuntary disappearance and 739 cases of extrajudicial killing. Civil court processes against alleged rebels had been far from fair, impartial and independent. Many of the accused had not been represented by a defence lawyer, despite facing the death penalty. Furthermore, it had been reported that at least 128 detainees had been convicted based on evidence extracted through the use of force.

50. The Commission should urge the Government of Indonesia to revoke the status of martial law in Aceh, to allow the international humanitarian community the opportunity to provide assistance to the people of the province and monitor the human rights situation, to invite the Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit Aceh and the rest of Indonesia as a matter of priority, to investigate and prosecute cases of gross human rights violations, and to create a body responsible for the protection of human rights defenders.

51. Mr. LITTMAN (World Union for Progressive Judaism) said that the Commission should address the alarming wave of anti-Semitism that had spread not only through Europe but through a growing part of the Arab and Muslim world. It could no longer ignore what was a major motivating force behind the ideology of jihad, which had been responsible for the shocking acts of Islamist terror that had left a bloody trail from Manhattan to Madrid.

52. Europe's reaction to the scourge had so far been disappointing. It continued to allow Islamists openly to preach their anti-democratic values and poisonous Judeophobia in the heart of Europe. In the past three years, there had been an unprecedented wave of attacks on Jewish institutions, synagogues and individual Jews throughout the EU. The struggle against jihadist terrorism, anti-Semitism and racism was an indivisible part of the worldwide campaign for human rights.

53. The Commission should take urgent action with regard to the massive humanitarian tragedy in the Sudan. A total of 503 non-Muslim Africans were currently being held in a government compound in Mieram. The Commission should call for their immediate release.

54. Mr. ROSSI (International Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty) said that the alarming rise in religious extremism threatened the construction of a fair, pluralist and peaceful society, as did the rise in religious totalitarianism under which whole societies were being forced by law to profess a certain religion. Those who did not wish to conform were considered to be infidels, to be forced into compliance. States had a duty to respect human dignity and to ensure that all citizens enjoyed the same rights and freedoms, regardless of their religion. Human beings were all equal, but it had to be recognized that they were all different. Ethnic, cultural, religious and other differences should be considered as being a source of wealth. It was not necessary to eliminate differences in order to be able to cooperate together for the common good.

55. Mr. FATTORINI (Médecins du Monde International) said that his organization wished to draw the Commission's attention once again to the systematic and serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that continued to take place in Chechnya. Many displaced Chechens living in camps in Ingushetia were being forced against their will to return to Chechnya, where they continued to live in fear of their lives and often resided illegally as they did not have the necessary papers. Those who continued to live in the camps were facing a growing number of threats by the authorities that they would no longer receive humanitarian assistance or health care. Indeed, humanitarian workers had been refused access to three camps for two weeks at the end of 2003 and one camp had been closed entirely in September 2003. Some Chechens were removed from the camps by armed and masked soldiers.

56. In Chechnya, the forces responsible for civilian security were, in fact, the greatest source of insecurity for the people living there. The biggest problem was the abduction of civilians by the different Chechen security forces, who usually worked together with the Russian military.

57. His organization urged the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the state of human security in Chechnya and Ingushetia and called on the international community to put pressure on the parties to the conflict to guarantee respect for the fundamental rights of the Chechen people. The international community should encourage the Russian and Ingushetian authorities to offer a decent alternative to displaced Chechens who did not wish to return to Chechnya.

58. Mr. HUSSAIN (International Human Rights Association of American Minorities) said that the people living in the Indian-occupied State of Jammu and Kashmir continued to be the victims of daily flagrant human rights violations perpetrated by the occupying military and paramilitary forces. A Kashmiri NGO had reported that a total of 1,984 persons had disappeared in the region since 2000. The Commission had a responsibility and a duty to prevent such gross violations of human rights.

59. Mr. REHMANI (World Muslim Congress) said that, despite the recent thaw in its bilateral relations with Pakistan, India continued to commit massive human rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir. Its policy of using the civilian population as a human shield had led to a further five deaths in Bandipur on 8 February 2004. Consequently, human rights activists were calling for a ban on the use of forced labour by the Indian army. However, with India refusing to allow international human rights observers access to Jammu and Kashmir, the army continued to commit acts of rape and violence with impunity.

60. Ms. PEREZ GUTIERREZ (National Union of Jurists of Cuba) said that, since 1959, over 3,000 Cubans had died as a result of actions by the Government of the United States. Nevertheless, its ruthless blockade had failed to weaken the resolve of the Cuban people. In her report on the situation of human rights in Cuba (E/CN.4/2004/32), the Personal Representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had made false allegations concerning the trials of 80 civilians in Cuba. Criminal proceedings in all of those cases had taken place in full compliance with the laws and Constitution of Cuba. In fact, the report had focused more on the political system than on the human rights situation in Cuba.

61. Mr. CHEIKH (International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations) said that, since 1975, Morocco had been trying to annihilate the population of Western Sahara. Countless families had been separated and many people had fled to Algeria as a result of the repressive measures employed by the Government of Morocco. Advocates of the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara had disappeared, and the victims' relatives had been prevented from attending meetings of the Commission on Human Rights. Only concerted pressure from the international community could persuade the Government of Morocco to improve the human rights situation for the people of Western Sahara.

62. Mr. ALY (International Union of Socialist Youth) drew attention to the systematic harassment of human rights activists and trade unionists in Western Sahara. In June 2003, the Moroccan authorities had closed down an association of human rights defenders, in an attempt to silence opposition to its occupation of Western Sahara. They had also confiscated the passports of 13 human rights activists who had intended to travel to Geneva to address the Commission. The occupying forces had built a wall, surrounded by barbed wire and minefields, to restrict the freedom of movement of local inhabitants. He urged the Commission to send a fact-finding mission to the region to investigate human rights abuses.

63. Mr. AUNG (Worldview International Foundation) said that the military junta in Burma had continued to arrest and persecute democracy activists, including leaders of the most popular political party, the National League for Democracy. It had ignored all efforts by the United Nations Secretary-General to facilitate a process of national reconciliation. In November 2003, a Myanmar court had sentenced nine persons to death on account of their links with the International Labour Organization. The so-called roadmap to democracy, presented by

the military junta, was nothing but a smokescreen for the benefit of the international community. It was neither inclusive nor transparent, and failed to engage in dialogue with the people of Burma.

64. Ms. SHAWL (International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations) said that systematic human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, rape in custody, arbitrary arrest and detention of civilians, had occurred in Indian-occupied Kashmir. Over the last 15 years, Indian security forces had killed more than 85,000 Kashmiris and raped more than 9,000 women. A total of 105,000 children had been orphaned. The Commission should demand the withdrawal of Indian troops from Kashmir, as well as the abolition of repressive laws. It should help the Kashmiri people to realize their right to self-determination and to gain access to international human rights mechanisms.

65. Mr. PARY (Indian Movement “Tupaj Amaru”) said that, for the past 45 years, the United States had pursued an unprecedented campaign of State terrorism against Cuba, designed to destroy its socialist model. A criminal blockade had denied essential medicines and tools to the Cuban people, while the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had helped to prepare and finance terrorist attacks against Cuba. Trained by the CIA, Mr. Luis Posada Carriles and various other terrorists had bombed a Cuban aircraft in 1976, killing 73 people, and carried out a series of further attacks, killing over 3,000 Cubans. Recently, the United States had designated Cuba as belonging to an “axis of evil”, and imprisoned five Cubans who dared to defend their country against terrorism.

66. Mr. WASEY (Voluntary Action Network India) said that a new world order had emerged, in which State and non-State actors committed gross human rights violations. New threats, such as terrorism and the use of mercenaries, were being dealt with under other agenda items. However, the most serious threat to the enjoyment of human rights came from States which, in defiance of the United Nations, promoted violent conflict and waged unilateral wars against other countries. It was vital to strengthen the United Nations, in order to prevent the aggression of States that pursued strategic objectives through war.

67. Mr. DIKU (International Committee for the Respect and Application of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights - CIRAC) said that serious human rights abuses had been committed during the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo between 1998 and 2003. However, the Government had yet to adopt a law implementing the Statute of the International Criminal Court, which would allow for the prosecution of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. In spite of the Government’s claims that it sought to combat impunity, it had given its tacit approval for further human rights abuses. It had neither provided medical assistance to people suffering from psychological trauma, nor allocated sufficient resources to national human rights institutions. He urged the international community to set up an international criminal tribunal to consider war crimes, crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo before July 2002.

68. Ms. BORREGO (Centro de Estudios Sobre la Juventud) said that five Cubans had been detained in the United States for the last five years without any proof that they had committed a criminal offence. In fact, their only crime had been to try to prevent a terrorist attack from being committed in Cuba. Furthermore, their parents were denied the right to visit

their sons in prison. The United States should be condemned for that and other human rights abuses, lest it be allowed to continue flouting international law with impunity. She called for the immediate release of the prisoners, and for an end to the blockade against Cuba.

69. Mr. GUITOO (Organization for Defending Victims of Violence) expressed concern over the following human rights abuses in the Islamic Republic of Iran: a substantial delay had occurred in the trial concerning the murder of Ms. Zahra Kazemi; a number of candidates had been prevented from standing for election; and serious restrictions applied to the freedom of expression, particularly with regard to journalists. He urged the Government to ratify the Convention against Torture, as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

70. Ms. MINGOT (Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man), also speaking on behalf of Al-Mezan and Habitat International Coalition, and supported by the World Organization Against Torture, drew attention to the serious violations of international law and deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel had built a wall that had annexed at least 40 per cent of the West Bank, which not only constituted an unlawful acquisition of land, but also aggravated restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of movement and access to essential services. Moreover, Israeli security forces continued to use torture on detainees, including women and children, and to conduct unfair trials and destroy civilian homes.

71. Mr. DJAMIN (Netherlands Organization for International Development Cooperation) said that the human rights situation in Indonesia had deteriorated, owing to the imposition of martial law in Aceh and the threat of emergency laws in West Papua. The President had used the global war against terrorism as justification for the introduction of repressive laws, giving wide-ranging powers to the armed forces. Substantial delays had occurred in the investigations relating to two major human rights abuse cases, and the ad hoc East Timor trials had failed to establish the truth relating to the events of 1999. He urged the Government to implement the special autonomy law on West Papua, repeal repressive anti-terrorism laws, arrange for the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and implement the recommendations of other United Nations special procedures.

72. Mr. SHARMA (International Institute for Peace) said that a nexus was being encouraged in Bangladesh between international terrorist groups and fundamentalist elements within the country. The Bengali people were known for their enlightenment and sophistication but the Jamaat-e-Islami, a fundamentalist religious party drawing inspiration from its counterpart in Pakistan, was manipulating the way in which the country was governed and seeking to influence its values. When extremist elements found that a Government was unwilling or unable to oppose them, their activities became bolder and had an adverse impact on the welfare of minority groups. Although the ruling alliance in Bangladesh denied that it supported extremists or terrorists, it had not only failed to curb attacks on minority groups but had begun a campaign to stifle the voices of those who advocated secular politics and equal rights for all. Journalists who had documented abuses of minority rights had been arrested and harassed, often on trumped-up charges.

73. The international human rights community and the media should not lose sight of developments in Bangladesh because of the prominence being given to events in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. He urged the Commission to conduct an immediate investigation into the condition of minorities in Bangladesh.

74. Mr. FATTORINI (Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples) said that violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in China persisted despite the change of leadership and very high rates of economic growth. Restrictions continued to be placed on freedom of association, especially of trade unions, freedom of expression and freedom of movement, while expropriations and forced displacement seemed to be increasing in priority development zones. Widespread corruption in the single-party structures and administration made it difficult for ordinary citizens to obtain justice. Using the fight against terrorism as a pretext, the authorities flouted the most basic human rights in the region of Xinjiang. The Parliament had recently enshrined human rights in the Constitution but the practical implications of that step were as yet unclear. It was to be hoped that China would allow the Commission to hold an open debate on the human rights situation on its territory without resorting to fallacious ideological arguments or citing basic principles of international law. He called on the Commission to live up to its responsibility as the custodian of human rights and to resist any pressures to which it might be subjected.

75. The recent electoral farce in the Islamic Republic of Iran demonstrated that the reactionary forces that had consistently opposed any positive development, especially in civil and political rights, remained determined to maintain strict control over all forms of individual freedom. The return to power of the conservatives augured ill for the population's rights and freedoms. He strongly urged the Commission to adopt a resolution firmly reminding the Iranian authorities of their international human rights obligations.

76. While there had been some change for the better in Morocco, he noted with concern that the Committee against Torture had expressed concern, in the conclusions and recommendations on Morocco's report adopted at its previous session, about the increase in the number of allegations of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The fight against terrorism could not justify human rights violations.

77. Moreover, the process whereby the Sahrawi people were to be given the opportunity to vote freely on their final status had again been delayed, apparently at the behest of Morocco. He called on all parties to the conflict to release the prisoners who were still being held and appealed to the Moroccan authorities to show that they wished to join the community of modern nations.

78. Ms. MINA (Observer for Cyprus), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said she was responding to a statement by the delegation of Turkey at a previous meeting. The Government of Cyprus was the legitimate and internationally recognized Government of the Republic of Cyprus. No country except Turkey recognized the illegitimate "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" whose establishment in the occupied part of the island had been condemned by the Security Council. She objected to references to the right of self-determination of that entity, which had made an unlawful unilateral declaration of independence. The allegation that the Turkish Cypriots had been faced with extermination was unfounded. It was they who had withdrawn from the Government to promote Turkey's plans for partition.

79. Although the statements by the delegation of Turkey did not augur well for the outcome of the talks being held under the auspices of the Secretary-General, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus remained committed to the process and was working hard to achieve a viable solution that would lead to the reunification of Cyprus.

80. Mr. MOLCHAN (Observer for Belarus), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, referred to statements by the delegations of the United States and Canada on agenda item 9. The delegation of Canada had deliberately misled the Commission by alleging that there continued to be disappearances in Belarus. Five cases of “political disappearances” were held to have occurred in 1999 and 2000. Two of the persons concerned had turned up in the meantime: one was living in the United Kingdom and the other had been driven out of Belarus in a car belonging to the United States Embassy in Minsk. Criminal investigations into the other three disappearances were being vigorously pursued.

81. It was particularly surprising to hear such allegations from the delegation of Canada, a country with a serious problem of extrajudicial executions and disappearances. For example, on 22 March 2004 the Native Women’s Association of Canada had called on the Government to investigate the disappearance of indigenous women. According to the Association, some 500 women had been murdered or had disappeared during the past 20 years.

82. As to the statement by the delegation of the United States, Belarus had given detailed information in its own statement on agenda item 9 about the activities of NGOs and the media, which could operate freely in Belarus provided that they remained within the bounds of the law. With regard to religious organizations, Belarus was virtually the only country of the former Soviet Union in which peace still reigned between the different religions. He added that the scale of human rights violations within the United States and by the United States in third countries was well known to all.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

(agenda item 10) (E/CN.4/2004/10 and Add.1-2, 37-40, 41 and Add.1, 42, 43 and Add.1, 44, 45 and Add.1-2, 46 and Add.1 and Corr.1 and Add.2-3, 47 and Add.1-2, 48 and Add.1-3, 49 and Add.1-2 and 120; E/CN.4/2004/G/9, 10, 13, 14, 16 and 27; E/CN.4/2004/NGO/9, 10, 12, 20, 27-29, 83, 93, 103, 116, 122, 135, 144, 152, 185, 193, 199, 223 and 230; E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/12/Rev.2)

83. Ms. LIZIN (Independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty), introducing her report in documents E/CN.4/2004/43 and Add.1, said that extreme poverty was an absolute denial of human rights, regardless of the degree of development of the country in which the phenomenon occurred. Since taking up her mandate six years previously, she had developed contacts with central and local authorities and NGOs in a large number of States as well as with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The United Nations Secretary-General had involved her in developing the Millennium Development Goals and the Managing Director of the IMF had set aside at least one half-day each year for a discussion of economic, social and cultural rights with the Fund’s staff. The NGO ATD Fourth World deserved special praise for its work on behalf of the poor throughout the world.

84. It was important not to surrender to pessimism, although extreme poverty was still a pervasive phenomenon and, for example, the amount appropriated by Governments for military spending in 2003 was sufficient not only to build all the schools needed by the under-18 population of Africa but also to pay their teachers for 15 years. According to UNDP predictions, on present trends more than 3.5 billion human beings would live in unhealthy urban environments in the year 2050. Developments in Asia had, however, been quite impressive during the past six years. China, in particular, had been exceptionally successful in fighting poverty and creating jobs. In Latin America, Brazil led the field in terms of health and education policies.

85. The World Bank and the IMF, particularly the former, had moved from their traditional structural adjustment policies to approaches based on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and Poverty Reduction and Growth Facilities (PRGFs). A greater effort was being made to involve the populations of the countries concerned in determining the goals of World Bank and IMF projects. She had worked with the teams that had prepared the World Bank's PRSPs in Benin and Bolivia.

86. Most countries expressed good intentions with respect to the empowerment of women but had in most cases little to show in practice. She had been impressed, however, by developments in Yemen, where the authorities seemed determined to offer even more power to women than they were demanding.

87. It was important to establish reliable civil registration services in countries which had no access to data concerning the structure of their population. Ensuring that women had identity cards was a way of protecting them and ensuring that they enjoyed civil rights. She encouraged the Commission to make resources available to States that wished to restructure their civil service and establish civil registration facilities.

88. Racism against the poor was an extremely widespread phenomenon and had increased over the past six years, with the spread of fear and hence also of hatred. She drew attention in that connection to her report on the Dominican Republic (E/CN.4/2003/52/Add.1). The rich countries had adopted highly restrictive immigration policies, resulting in phenomena such as "fortress Europe". An exacerbation of racism and tensions had led in many cases to the exclusion of Muslim communities.

89. She had examined certain Islamic financial practices in the Arab world, particularly in Yemen, and found that they could serve the cause of poverty eradication.

90. Mr. TABRIZI (Yemen) thanked the Independent expert for her balanced and positive report on her visit to Yemen in October 2003. During the period 1990-1994, his country had suffered a severe economic crisis because of its attitude to the changes brought about by the 1991 Gulf War. More than a million Yemeni emigrant workers, on whose remittances more than 7 million people had depended, had returned from the Gulf States after the war. Foreign assistance had been suspended, leading to a major increase in indebtedness. Employment had increased, the value of the Yemeni currency had declined, the economy had slumped and negative growth rates had been recorded.

91. The authorities had developed strategies from 1995 to restore economic stability and create jobs for the population. An economic, financial and administrative reform programme had been adopted in cooperation with the IMF, the World Bank, UNDP and a number of donors. Two successive five-year plans and a poverty reduction programme had been developed with partners from donor countries, the private sector and civil society. The Millennium Development Goals, including universal primary education and the empowerment of women, had been endorsed as development priorities.

92. Considerable success had been achieved in addressing the structural causes of poverty. Top priority was being given to strategic projects aimed at economic growth, development of human resources, building up the country's infrastructure and providing social protection for all. Some 73 per cent of the total cost of the projects for the next three years would be met from local sources and the remainder from foreign funding sources. However, to bridge the gap between current achievements and the Millennium Development Goals, Yemen would need further assistance from donors to finance new projects.

93. Mr. ABDALLA (Sudan) said that his country's rapid response to the request by the Independent expert to visit the Sudan demonstrated its willingness to cooperate with OHCHR. He commended the objective approach adopted by the Independent expert in her report and thanked her for appealing to donor States and institutions to provide the Sudan with assistance amounting to US\$ 40 million to complete its civil registration programme. The Sudan had also responded favourably to the request by the Commission's Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression to visit the country. It was not therefore necessary for the Commission to adopt resolutions to secure a country's cooperation with its special procedures.

94. The Independent expert's report had highlighted the country's progress in fighting poverty in accordance with the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. She had noted the role played in that endeavour by national institutions and funds, including charity, pension, health and social welfare bodies and the country's savings bank. A large number of projects in the areas of health, education and water supply, also in rural areas and among nomadic communities, were funded by semi-State enterprises. Moreover, oil companies were required to allocate a portion of their revenue to assisting local communities in the areas where they operated.

95. In addition to the progress noted by the Independent expert in the area of civil registration, the Government had enacted a Civil Registration Act in 2001. Thanks to computerization, each citizen now received an identity card and number. Moreover, nationality legislation had been amended so that the children of Sudanese women could acquire Sudanese citizenship even if their father was a foreigner. He invited the Independent expert to visit the Sudan again to assess the latest developments.

96. Mr. LA Yifan (China) thanked the Independent expert for her favourable comments on China's efforts to alleviate poverty. Although 250 million people in his country had been raised above the poverty threshold during the past two decades, 28 million were still living in poverty and the Chinese authorities were fully aware of their responsibilities in that regard.

97. The United States claimed to be the most developed country in the world and its military expenditure was greater than that of all other countries combined. Yet at the same time poverty and homelessness were worsening. According to the United States Census Bureau, the number of poor people had risen in 2003 to 34.6 million, the proportion of needy children to 16.7 per cent and the number of homeless people to more than 3 million. He wondered whether the Independent expert had requested the United States Government to issue an invitation to her to assist it in improving the situation.

98. Ms. ROMAN MALDONADO (Dominican Republic) asked for clarification of the Independent expert's reference to a resurgence of racism in the Dominican Republic since she had submitted her report on her visit to the Dominican Republic to the Commission at the previous session.

99. Mr. CAHALANE (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the EU noted that the Independent expert had referred in her report to the strong link between extreme poverty and female illiteracy. He asked her to provide concrete examples of ways in which access to educational institutions, especially for girls, had been facilitated.

100. He further asked which three factors contributing to extreme poverty should be given top priority in attempting to tackle what was an extremely complex issue in the years ahead.

101. In view of the importance of civil registration services, what steps could be taken to ensure universal provision of identity papers and to prevent statelessness so as to promote and protect the human rights of the poorest in society?

102. The Independent expert had mentioned in her report on her visit to Yemen that the high cost of issuing identity papers was a major obstacle to progress in providing women with identity cards. He asked whether any specific programmes had been introduced to remedy the problem.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.