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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 39th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 11 November 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. TEXIER

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

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Second, third and fourth periodic reports of the Philippines (E/C.12/PHL/4; E/C.12/PHL/Q/4 and Add.1; HRI/CORE/1/Add.37)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of the Philippines took places at the Committee table.
2. The CHAIRPERSON invited the head of delegation to make an opening statement.
3. Ms. BASILIO (Philippines), introducing her country's combined second, third and fourth periodic reports (E/C.12/PHL/4), underscored the long-standing importance attached by the Government of the Philippines to human rights and the special role it had played in supporting the right of self-determination. The country had ratified all eight of the core human rights instruments, and was a party to many more treaties dealing with human rights, including the major instruments on genocide, the status of refugees, humanitarian law, labour issues and discrimination in education.
4. While the vast majority of the indigenous groups in the Philippines had adopted modern lifestyles, some had chosen to maintain their traditional way of life. In 1997 The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act had been promulgated in order to recognize the ancestral domains and lands of small indigenous groups, to preserve their cultural identities and to promote and protect their rights, including their means of livelihood. Since the adoption of the Act, the Government had issued over 250 certificates of ancestral domains or lands, benefiting some 336,000 people. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples was responsible for attending to the needs and welfare of such groups. The Government had also established the Muslim Mindanao and Cordillera Autonomous Regions.
5. According to the human development index established by the United Nations Development Programme, the Philippines was in the higher portion of the medium human development category. Given the country's progression over the past 30 years, it was well placed to breach the threshold to the high human development category in the near future. In the Philippines, women had higher life expectancies, adult literacy rates and enrolment ratios than men. There were more female than male professional and technical workers, legislators and senior officials and managers. While women were still at a disadvantage in terms of estimated earned income, the World Economic Forum had ranked the Philippines very high in terms of educational attainment, health and the survival of women and economic participation and opportunity.
6. The natural disasters which the country regularly faced were an obstacle to development and were a cause of poverty. While some 36 per cent of the population lived below the poverty

line, the country compared favourably with other developing countries in terms of life expectancy, infant and child mortality, literacy, school enrolment, immunization rates and access to clean water and to information and communication.

7. The Government had entered into peace negotiations with a view to ending the two armed insurgencies facing the country, both of which diverted resources and resulted in human rights violations. Military expenditure accounted for less than 1 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), while outlays for health services and education were respectively 1.4 per cent and 2.7 per cent of GDP.

8. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Committee members to pose questions relating to general aspects of implementation of the Covenant and to articles 1 to 5.

9. Mr. RIEDEL pointed out that, as early as 1995, during consideration of the Philippines' initial report, the Committee had referred in its concluding observations to the fact that the status of the Covenant had been unclear, in particular in respect of the judiciary. That was still the case. While the Philippines Commission on Human Rights was able to issue recommendations, its decisions did not have the strength or authority of court decisions, and the jurisprudence relating to economic, social and cultural rights left much to be desired. Although article 2.2 of the Constitution made the Covenant applicable in the Philippines, over a period of 20 years the Government had been able to cite just two examples of court cases invoking the Covenant. What policies had been adopted to implement economic, social and cultural rights, and what powers had been given to the Philippines Commission on Human Rights to promote and protect such rights?

10. Mr. TIRADO MEJÍA said that, according to information received by the Committee, the Philippines Commission on Human Rights did not act in an independent manner, and the country's human rights plans had been drawn up without civil society being consulted. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had in its concluding observations called for broadening of the mandate of the Philippines Commission on Human Rights. Had any measures been taken in that regard? What had been done to integrate people displaced by the armed insurgencies, the majority of whom were women and children, for example by providing them with housing, education and psychological assistance?

11. Mr. ZHAN Daode, noting that the periodic report stated that the Philippines Commission on Human Rights dealt primarily with civil and political rights, asked to what extent its mandate also covered economic, social and cultural rights.

12. Ms. WILSON said that the Committee had learned that, notwithstanding the protective provisions of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, foreign mining companies were exploiting natural resources on indigenous lands. What were the procedures for the granting of such concessions? There was reportedly a large number of people who had been deported from Malaysia to the Philippines and, according to some sources, many were detained in the Philippines in appalling conditions. She asked what was being done to improve their situation, and whether any had been repatriated. Lastly, according to some reports, including from the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, there had been a large number of killings and forced disappearances in 2003. What had been done to bring the perpetrators to justice?

13. Mr. SA`DI, noting that the Philippines had recently been the subject of the universal periodic review mechanism in the Human Rights Council, asked the delegation to give its assessment of that procedure. Had it been beneficial? While the head of delegation had in her opening comments provided much information on the position or ranking of the Philippines with respect to other countries, the Committee was more interested in looking at national benchmarks and indicators of progress in the field of human rights than in making comparisons between countries.

14. In the light of the Philippines' professed commitment to human rights in general and to the Covenant in particular, he asked why it had taken 13 years for it to submit a periodic report. The delegation had emphasized the Government's long-standing commitment to self-determination. How did that fit in with the pursuit of that right by indigenous peoples? Specifically, what limits were there to the right to self-determination? According to the report, Muslims in the Philippines were covered by the Muslim Code of Personal Laws, which inter alia allowed marriage under the age of 18 and polygamy. Many Islamic scholars considered that modern Islam should not allow polygamy, and the vast majority of Muslim countries prohibited marriage before the age of 18. He expressed concern that the Government was permitting the perpetuation of practices harmful to women under the pretext of religious tolerance, when there was actually no need to do so.

15. Mr. PILLAY said that, notwithstanding the existence of anti-corruption courts and laws, the Philippines was generally considered to be the most corrupt country in the region. He questioned the depth of the political commitment to combating corruption and to ending the squandering of public funds. According to some estimates, corruption and waste had cost the country some US\$ 40 billion.

16. He asked why, to judge from the figures, the Government attached higher priority to debt servicing than to allocating resources to social services, which did not take into account the concerns of the Committee, particularly with regard to marginalized groups and poverty reduction.

17. Praising the chairperson of the Philippines Commission on Human Rights for her report and for continuing to maintain that her mandate included economic, social and cultural rights, despite a pronouncement by the Supreme Court to the contrary, he requested that she be invited to address the Committee. He suggested that the Government should extend the mandate of the Commission to cover violations of economic, social and cultural rights.

18. The CHAIRPERSON noted that there appeared to be no objection to the chairperson of the Philippines Commission on Human Rights being invited to address the Committee.

19. Ms. BRAS GOMES enquired about the place of economic, social and cultural rights within the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010. The severe cutbacks in social expenditure to permit debt servicing, referred to in one of the alternative reports received by the Committee, did not sit easily with the statement that the Philippines was well on the way to achieving a high human development index. The Muslim Mindanao Autonomous Region was notably less developed than the rest of the country. She solicited the delegation's views in that regard.

20. She expressed concern that the Mining Act was being used to undermine implementation of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act. The streamlining of procedures for granting mining concessions was not necessarily a positive step. If a rights-based approach were being followed, indigenous peoples should be central to the process, but it seemed that mining was being promoted as the only tool for development without proper consultation of indigenous communities. She requested information on the impact of extensive mineral extraction on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, particularly by indigenous and marginalized groups.

21. Mr. ATANGANA asked what steps had been taken to comply with the recommendations of the universal periodic review concerning gender equality and the rights of women and children.

22. Mr. RZEPLINSKI asked where the impact of the financial crisis was most likely to be felt, especially given the country's high dependence on international trade, and what the Government would do in the event of a debt crisis.

23. Among various problems affecting the enjoyment of basic social rights, information from human rights organizations indicated that the issue of land was of particular importance. The high population density and shortage of land meant that many farmers were dependent on landlords, and he asked whether any mechanism other than judicial process, which could be lengthy, existed to protect them in the event of conflicts or economic exploitation and to provide mediation.

24. He asked how much training in human rights was provided to police officers and how many police officers had been sentenced for abusing their power, for example in clashes with opposing forcible eviction, during the previous year. He also asked whether the judiciary was free of corruption and what oversight mechanisms existed in that regard.

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.

25. Mr. LEPATAN (Philippines), reiterating that the Covenant was applicable in the Philippines under the Constitution, said that, while specific laws on the rights of women and children already existed and were justiciable, certain other aspects of the Covenant, for example the rights to food and shelter, had yet to be tested judicially. The position of the Philippines in that regard was not unique. During discussions on drafting the Optional Protocol to the Covenant, some concerns had been expressed with respect to its justiciability.

26. The Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions had drawn attention to more than 800 alleged extrajudicial killings. Government investigations had revealed evidence of such in only 121 of those cases. Of the rest, many had been misreported: in some cases, the alleged victims were still alive or were non-existent persons. The figure had also included the killing of 23 convicted terrorists, several of whom had died during a violent jailbreak. A working group on forced disappearances had recorded similar findings: of 150 clarified cases, 105 people were in detention for committing crimes and only 29 were dead. Most of the alleged victims had not actually disappeared.

27. Ms. DECENA VALDEZ (Philippines) outlined the work of the Task Force against Political Violence, created in November 2007 under Administrative Order No. 211. Some notable successes were described in paragraph 251, section C, subsections (iv) to (vi), of the Government's replies in document E/C.12/PHL/Q/1/Add.1; several individuals were currently on trial as a result. In addition to mobilizing government agencies, civil society, religious groups and non-governmental organizations to address the problem of extrajudicial killings, including the enforcement of arrest warrants and the preparation of a database to assist in monitoring cases, the Task Force revived inactive cases. Progress had been made in more than 40 cases, and the Task Force pursued its activities in full independence of the Government and the military.

28. Mr. LEPATAN (Philippines) expressed regret for the late submission of the country's periodic reports, which had been caused by the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and a change of Government in the Philippines.

29. Mr. CATURA (Philippines) stressed the central place of human rights in the Philippines system of government, particularly in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. No political, social or economic achievement could justify failure to promote and protect human rights. The rights-based approach was evident in the policy followed by the current administration, with its focus on social development, as could be seen in the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010, the 10-Point "Legacy" Agenda on socio-economic and political reform, and the measures to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Against that backdrop, the Government had established two human rights bodies to monitor compliance with international treaty obligations. The 11-point mandate of the Philippines Commission on Human Rights, which he outlined, might seem to restrict its activities to a certain extent, but it should be borne in mind that the mandate had been drawn up when the country had been emerging from a period of dictatorial rule. In December 2005, the Commission had adopted a resolution invoking international principles to extend the scope of its investigative monitoring to economic, social and cultural rights, an initiative which the Government respected.

30. The Presidential Human Rights Committee, chaired by the Executive Secretary of the President, followed up on and coordinated human rights compliance as part of the effective governance strategy. It had spearheaded the development and implementation of the second National Human Rights Action Plan, to which civil society organizations had contributed through participation in a series of thematic cluster meetings organized by the Government. Their input would play a significant role in the nationwide consultations scheduled to start by January 2009.

31. Since 2006, his country had increased emphasis on compliance with international treaties and had identified lead agencies which, it was hoped, would facilitate the timely submission of reports; the lead agency for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was the National Economic and Development Authority. In 2006, the functions of the Presidential Human Rights Committee had been strengthened by the admission of the Chairperson of the Philippines Commission on Human Rights, the Ombudsman, the Court Administrator and the Chairpersons of the Senate and House Committees on Justice and Human Rights, as observers.

32. Human rights protection was promoted by concerned stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental institutions. A system of checks and balances existed and the rule of law and due process prevailed. The Office of the Ombudsman investigated and prosecuted human rights abuses by public officials and employees. Moreover, the criminal justice system ensured the access of vulnerable sectors to legal mechanisms and remedies.

33. Congress approved the annual budgetary allocations to the Philippines Commission on Human Rights and the executive branch extended help as necessary, such as in the case of the additional funds provided to deal with extrajudicial killings.

34. Mr. GARCIA (Philippines) said that his Government sought to protect and assist its nationals worldwide, including in Sabah in consultation with Malaysia, where visiting consular teams had found no evidence of maltreatment. A working group established in 2005 to address the problems of Filipino workers in Malaysia had laid down a framework for consultation and cooperation between the two countries and also dealt with stateless children, detainees and repatriation. The two countries had held talks on regularizing the situation of undocumented workers; in cases where that was not possible, the Malaysian Government had agreed to ensure that detention centres adequately respected the human rights of detainees and deportees.

35. His country was cooperating with Malaysia against human trafficking and working actively with Association of Southeast Asian Nations partners and others in order to strengthen protections and mobility for migrant workers in the region and worldwide.

36. Mr. LUCENTALES (Philippines) said that deportees were given diplomatic and concrete assistance on arrival in Mindanao. Since 2000, the Department of Social Welfare and Development had assisted some 85,000 deportees from Sabah. Most were undocumented migrant workers and had been given basic assistance to return to their place of origin for reintegration; a one-stop shop existed for those whose documents could be processed. A processing centre for displaced persons had been maintained in the south of the country since 2000. In June 2008, Malaysia and the Philippines had agreed that only able-bodied persons would be deported, no children would be deported without parents and the Malaysian authorities would implement Malaysia's Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act and ensure rational, humane deportation. The Department was now piloting a comprehensive reintegration programme for deportees. He challenged the Malaysian authorities to address the trafficking of Filipino women in hospitality establishments in Sabah and the hiring of undocumented labourers on palm oil and rubber plantations.

37. Contrary to media reports, there was no humanitarian crisis in the Mindanao evacuation centres. The Government had taken full responsibility for the needs of internally displaced persons in the remaining evacuation centres and had spent considerable sums on humanitarian assistance, giving priority to women and children, and the assessment of that assistance, conducted by the inter-agency coordination team in 2008, had been fair. The stage was set for early recovery and rehabilitation in areas declared safe for return. Assistance packages were being prepared by the National Disaster Coordinating Council, which had adopted the United Nations cluster approach to disaster management in dealing with internally displaced persons.

38. Mr. QUILAMAN (Philippines) said that the Government did not permit the rights of indigenous peoples to be undermined by other laws. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act emphasized the participation of the indigenous cultural communities in the protection of their rights and cultural integrity and the need to ensure that indigenous peoples benefited equally from opportunities granted to other sectors of the population. Moreover, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples had promulgated guidelines on free, prior and informed consent in 2002 which had been updated in 2006 to accommodate recommendations from civil society organizations and other concerned sectors. The Chairman of that Commission encouraged the participation of civil society in order to promote transparency.

39. The free, prior and informed consent process was essential as it gave leverage to indigenous peoples and provided for the consensus of indigenous communities in accordance with customary practices, free from coercion. The guidelines indicated that the process should be conducted in a language understandable by the community and strictly enjoined all Government agencies not to issue or renew any concession or enter into any production-sharing agreement without the prior agreement of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, to be certain that there was no encroachment upon indigenous ancestral domains. In the context of the Mining Act, the process ensured the genuine participation of indigenous peoples in the decision-making process and just and equitable partnership in the management, use, development and exploitation of ancestral domains.

40. The President had sought to revitalize mining in 2004 and had set a national policy agenda based on principles of responsible mining, emphasizing the critical role of investment and regulatory policies, the use of efficient technologies, environmental protection, social responsibility and equitable sharing of benefits in order to enhance sustainable development. The rights of indigenous peoples were protected, as was the ecological integrity of areas and communities affected by mining. A member of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples represented the issues and concerns of indigenous peoples and, in particular, ensured strict observance of the free and prior informed consent process, on the Minerals Development Council that had been established in 2004.

41. The Government held the view that self-determination should not encourage the secession of indigenous peoples but should be considered within the framework of national unity and development, as provided for in the 1987 Constitution.

42. The CHAIRPERSON said that the points raised suggested that the State party might benefit from ratifying the International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, No. 169, and asked whether it had any objection to doing so.

43. Mr. LEPATAN (Philippines) said that the Convention had been signed by only 20 countries to date and needed to be updated. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act enshrined the concept of inalienable ancestral lands and was, therefore, superior to the Convention, which provided only for collective areas for indigenous peoples. For those reasons, it was not useful for his country to ratify that Convention.

44. Ms. VERSOZA (Philippines) said that discrimination in the Muslim Code of Personal Laws was being addressed through developing a constituency of Muslims with a progressive approach to human rights. At the same time, efforts were being made to raise awareness of

gender issues among Muslim religious leaders and educators and to find ways of integrating those issues into Friday sermons. Training had recently been conducted with a group of Muslim religious leaders and educators on gender issues, including marriage and property rights, in addition to training on international human rights treaties including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the other core instruments that her country had ratified.

45. The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women also worked with government agencies, in keeping with the national women's machineries mandate on gender mainstreaming, to infuse a gender perspective and human rights awareness in Muslim areas. In Mindanao, for example, within the regional economic and development planning body, the Commission had recently assisted in the creation of a regional subcommittee on gender development, which was committed to developing a regional code of Muslim personal laws that incorporated principles of gender equality.

46. Since the promulgation of the Anti-Violence against Women and Their Children Act in 2004, more service providers had become aware of their duties and responsibilities and more women had learned of their right to be free from violence. The Act had created the Inter-Agency Council against Violence against Women which had developed a strategic plan to implement the Act more effectively. Inter-agency councils had also been set up at the regional and provincial levels in order to establish mechanisms for close coordination between police, social workers and health services.

47. It was difficult to determine the extent of violence against women as it was considered a private issue. However, it was hoped that by 2009 the National Demographic and Health Survey would reflect with some accuracy the scale of that phenomenon.

48. A documentation system was being developed to track the responses of government agencies to cases of violence against women, which would prevent duplication at the statistical level. Performance standards and assessment tools had been developed for those providing services in cases of violence against women that measured their gender responsiveness based on seven parameters.

49. In her country, the annual Campaign to End Violence against Women had been extended by a further two days from Human Rights Day to mark Anti-Trafficking Day on 12 December, both of which added emphasis to the national media campaign on violence against women. The focus in 2008 was on the Men Opposed to Violence against Women Everywhere campaign. Local government units supportive in cases of violence against women were recognized, and Gender Justice Awards were given to judges who made outstanding decisions in cases involving violence against women and gender issues.

50. With regard to the judiciary, the Committee on Gender Responsiveness in the Judiciary had a five-year plan to continue gender-sensitivity training for the judiciary and the Supreme Court had developed the Court Administration Management Information System through which sex-disaggregated data on court cases were available. It had also recently

organized a summit on access to justice for the poor, bringing together civil society representatives from marginalized groups to participate in workshops in which each of the basic sectors articulated their concerns on that issue. Moreover, the Supreme Court, the Department of Justice and the police were working on a capacity-building project on human rights and violence against women, funded by the Asian Development Bank.

51. Mr. ABRENILLA (Philippines), in response to a question on measures being taken to curb corruption, said that corruption was universally condemned in the State party and eliminating it was a priority for the current administration, as clearly stated in the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010. A three-pronged approach had been adopted for zero tolerance on corruption, involving punitive measures, enforcement mechanisms and preventive measures. The Presidential Anti-Graft Commission had been created to investigate corruption within the executive branches of government, and cases were referred to the Office of the Ombudsman. Between 2001 and 2007, 875 cases had been resolved and 126 officials sanctioned, including dismissals, suspensions and reprimands. The Integrity Development Action Plan (IDAP) included anti-corruption measures in the areas of investigation and enforcement, prevention, education and strategic partnership, and workshops and follow-up meetings had been held to ensure its implementation by providing information to IDAP implementing agencies and facilitating and monitoring action. Agencies were encouraged to share best practices on combating corruption. Other anti-corruption measures included focus-group discussions with stakeholders, circulars issued by the Presidential Committee to serve as guidelines for IDAP implementation, the establishment of special committees to support implementation measures, and professional training courses. The Philippines had received a grant of US\$ 300,000 from the World Bank in 2004 to strengthen internal audit units, and measures had included conducting a survey of governmental internal audits, creating an internal audit manual and running a training programme.

52. In response to a question regarding the global financial crisis, he said that the Philippines was fortunate in having made the necessary adjustments and reforms when times had been good. The Philippines was a haven of calm in comparison with the turmoil in other previously stable countries, and the crisis was having little impact on Philippine banking. Bank exposure to Lehman Brothers had been only US\$ 386 million, or 3 per cent of total banking assets; the capital adequacy ratio had been 14.1 per cent at the end of 2007, way above the Philippine Central Bank minimum requirement of 10 per cent; and the proportion of non-performing loans had fallen from 18 per cent in 2001 to 4 per cent in 2008. He outlined the national strategy for increasing growth, in such areas as agriculture, exports and investment. With respect to social protection services, programmes continued that protected the poorest sections of society. There had been no displacement of Filipinos working overseas, and the employment of 2 million workers in the Middle East and 500,000 in Europe remained secure and stable. Overseas Filipino workers that were most vulnerable to displacement included 129,000 workers in the United States of America on temporary visas, 130,000 seafarers on cruise ships and domestic staff in Singapore, Macao and Hong Kong.

53. In response to a question regarding persons displaced as a result of armed conflict, he said that government and internationally funded measures had been taken. An investment programme involved an assistance package, a series of investment programmes for the medium term and a

plan to strengthen response to displacement, aiming to rehabilitate and develop affected areas as quickly as possible through such measures as minimizing the level of violence, strengthening the peace through citizen participation in the peace process and providing core social services.

54. Ms. CAPONES (Philippines), in response to the question about national benchmarks and indicators, said that the Philippines had already prepared three progress reports on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). She provided data from those reports, which showed that the Philippines had made consistent progress since 1990 in the areas of poverty reduction, nutrition, infant and child mortality, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and access to drinking water and sanitation, but that further efforts were needed on other MDG areas, especially those in which there was a lower probability of success, such as maternal mortality and elementary education attendance.

55. In response to a question about whether account had been taken of the Covenant in preparing the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010, she said that the Plan included a series of strategies and programmes in support of the Covenant.

56. In reply to a question on expenditure on social services, she said that while it was true that the proportion of the national budget allocated to social services had decreased between 2000 and 2005, there had been an increase from 21.91 per cent in 2007 to 23.75 per cent in 2008, and the proposed allocation for 2009 stood at 30.67 per cent. It was further true that, with the huge increase in national Government foreign debt between 1997 and 2004, budget allocations to external debt servicing had also increased steadily in the past. However, that trend had been reversed in 2007, and the share of foreign debt repayments in the total national budget had fallen from 26.2 per cent in 2006 to 15.35 per cent in 2007. A debt reduction plan was currently being implemented, which included limiting borrowing to high-priority projects.

57. Mr. GARCIA (Philippines), in response to a question as to the nature of the Barangay (Village) Human Rights Action Centres, drew the Committee's attention to paragraphs 22 to 27 of the State party's written replies to the list of issues (E/C.12/PHL/Q/1/Add.1). The Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act assigned local government units a front-line role in poverty reduction, and the Local Government Code included the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights in the mandate of those units, thereby implementing the Covenant at the grass-roots level.

58. In response to a question regarding training programmes for the national police, he said that all police training programmes included human rights elements. The updated syllabus contained more courses, encompassing all levels of training and ranging from the rights of special groups of society such as women and children to the Bill of Rights. Enhancement seminars were also conducted periodically, on topics such as access to justice for the poor.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.