



**International Convention on
the Elimination of All Forms
of Racial Discrimination**

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Summary record of the 2150th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 29 February 2012, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Avtonomov

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention *(continued)*

Sixteenth to eighteenth periodic reports of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (continued) (CERD/C/LAO/16-18; CERD/C/LAO/Q/16-18)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Yiapaohou** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that while the official language used in court proceedings was Lao, litigants who did not speak Lao could use their own language and be assisted by an interpreter. Usually, they paid for the services of the interpreter themselves, but if they could not afford one they could ask the State to provide an interpreter free of charge. In practice, language issues did not pose a problem in court proceedings since judges, police officers and prosecutors belonging to the different ethnic groups tended to provide language assistance where necessary.
3. Under the Law on Complaints, any person could file complaints with administrative bodies, the judiciary and the National Assembly, and had the right to engage in litigation under the Civil Procedure Law and Criminal Procedure Law. People could challenge action by the State, including administrative rulings that adversely affected them, by submitting a complaint to the Government Inspection Authority attached to the Office of the Prime Minister. All administrative agencies had a box for complaints, and in rural areas complaints could be sent by post.
4. Representation of the Hmong in senior official posts had increased considerably since 1975, and one of the seven Hmong members of the Central Committee — a woman — had gone on to be President of the National Assembly. Since 1975 two Presidents of the National Assembly and three chairpersons of the Assembly's standing committees had been Hmong. The Hmong were also represented at ministerial level and in provincial administrations, where their number had increased 12 times. The Hmong were also represented in the armed forces and in the diplomatic corps. They could be found in a number of professions and included teachers, academics, pilots and nurses.
5. No cases of racial discrimination had been brought to court since the 49 ethnic groups in his country lived together peacefully and respectfully. Lao people had no concept of a "majority" or "minority" group. Any disputes relating to racial discrimination were settled amicably by means of the village mediation units, whose members included elders of ethnic groups and other members elected by villagers.
6. **Mr. Chanthalangsy** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that in 2011 the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief had visited his country, where she had met with religious leaders and talked to prisoners in jail. The Government was currently implementing some of the recommendations she had made.
7. There were three categories of migration in the State party: voluntary migration and settlement; resettlement as a result of rural development; and resettlement linked to major development projects. The Government attached great importance to rural development and to improving the living conditions of ethnic groups, especially those in remote and mountainous areas. During the reporting period, development activities had been pursued under the Sixth National Socio-Economic Development Plan; the current Plan was the seventh. Ethnic groups affected by major development projects were consulted prior to their implementation, and received assistance and any compensation due in accordance with Prime Minister's Decree No. 192/PM (2006) on Compensation and Resettlement of People

Affected by Development Projects. All assistance and compensation for affected people were fair and free from any ethnic or racial discrimination.

8. Bearing in mind that the main obstacle to socio-economic development in the State party was the scattered nature of the population, the Government pursued a policy of establishing development villages and cluster villages. To that end, it was implementing a relocation policy (Prime Minister's Decree No. 07/PM (2004)), which entailed moving people from remote, mountainous areas to new villages with infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, land for cultivation, roads, electricity, clean water and market access. In that way, the Government fulfilled its obligation to provide all its citizens, and particularly members of ethnic groups living in remote or mountainous areas, with public services and thereby improved their living conditions.

9. Mitigation of the impact of electricity and mining projects on the environment and on the livelihood of the population was provided for in the legislation governing environmental issues, electricity, mining, agriculture, land and compensation. Environmental and social-impact studies and mitigation plans had to be submitted in respect of all development and investment projects, including hydropower, mining and farming projects, before they could be approved. The corporations involved in the projects were required to respect standards of corporate social responsibility and to comply with national and international law in that regard. The Government worked to ensure that those projects did not entail any ethnic or racial discrimination.

10. Freedom of expression was guaranteed under the Constitution; there was free access to all radio and television stations, including those of neighbouring countries, and no radio frequencies had ever been jammed. The press and media constituted one of the fastest growing sectors in the country.

11. Many of the Hmong victims of transnational crime who in 2000 had been smuggled as migrants to Thailand in order to find work had returned to the Lao People's Democratic Republic by 2009 under bilateral agreements between the two countries. Returnees who had chosen to go back to their original homes had been given assistance and a resettlement allowance. For those who had not wished or been able to return to their homes, the Government had built, and invested heavily, in two development villages. The contribution of US\$ 1 million received from the Government of the United States of America had been used to buy tractors in order to clear land for cultivation. Delegations from international organizations, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, had visited both villages. The allegations that had been made, including by United Nations bodies, about Hmong people in those villages being killed, mistreated or imprisoned were completely baseless. A working group of the Human Rights Council appointed to investigate the allegations had recently found them to be unsubstantiated.

12. The reports of five Hmong children alleged to have been raped and killed by members of the Lao armed forces had originated in a video that had been widely broadcast. It had shown horrific images of children being killed but contained no details of the location, the victims' families or any other information that would enable the events to be investigated. Soon after receiving the report, the General Staff Department of the Ministry of Defence, by Decision No. 352/KPT (2004), established an investigation team comprising three high-ranking officers, one of them a Hmong, to investigate the allegations. The team had met with local officials and villagers in the area where the events were alleged to have taken place in an attempt to establish whether any families had reported missing children or any incidents that could help shed light on the case. At the time, both the commander of the Lao armed forces in the province in question and the governor of the province had been Hmong and had collaborated with the authorities in the investigation. If anything had happened to any member of the Hmong community, they would certainly have been told. They had, however, received no reports relating to the alleged events. The Minister of

Defence had concluded from the fact that the investigation team had failed to obtain any further details that the case was unfounded and should be closed, since it was merely a fabrication designed to harm the image of the armed forces.

13. Referring to the fact that the 2005 census had recorded 19 nationals of African countries, he said that census takers had visited every dwelling, including hotels and guest houses, in the country on the date of the census. He assumed that the 19 Africans had been visitors staying in hotels or guest houses. The Vietnamese, Chinese and Thai nationals recorded had been mostly businesspeople or migrant workers.

14. **Mr. Phommachack** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the Lao authorities attached great importance to the promotion of awareness of human rights treaties among public officials and the general public. All treaties to which the country was a party had been translated into the Lao language and widely publicized.

15. The Human Rights Division of the Department of Treaties and Law at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs played a coordinating role and served as a focal point for human rights issues. It was implementing the International Law Project, which was funded by the United Nations Development Programme, Finland and the European Union, organizing human rights seminars, workshops and training courses for government officials at the central and provincial levels. The closing date of the Project was 31 December 2012 but he hoped that UNDP and the donor country would support its continuation.

16. With regard to the conformity of the definition of racial discrimination with article 1 of the Convention, he said that article 1 of the Constitution stated explicitly that the Lao People's Democratic Republic was a unified country belonging to all its multi-ethnic people. Article 2 stipulated that all powers belonged to, and were exercised by, the multi-ethnic people in the interests of all social strata, including workers, farmers and the intelligentsia. Article 6 protected the freedom and democratic rights of all ethnic groups. It required all State organizations and government officials to generate public awareness of policies, regulations and laws. All types of bureaucracy and harassment that could be detrimental to people's honour, physical well-being and property were prohibited. Article 8 provided for a policy of promotion of unity and equality among all ethnic groups, entitling them to protect, preserve and promote their customs and culture. All acts conducive to division and discrimination among ethnic groups were prohibited. Part IV of the Constitution set forth the fundamental rights and obligations of Lao citizens, who were recognized as equal before the law irrespective of their gender, social status, education, beliefs or ethnic group. Lao citizens had the right to lodge complaints and petitions, and to propose ideas pertaining to the public interest or their own rights and interests to relevant State organizations.

17. Article 66 of the Criminal Code stipulated that any person who incited discord or caused resentment between ethnic groups and social strata with the intention of undermining national solidarity would be liable to imprisonment for 1–5 years and a fine of 500,000–10 million kip. Article 176 of the Criminal Code stipulated, *inter alia*, that any person who discriminated against another person on grounds of ethnicity would be liable to imprisonment for 1–3 years and a fine of 1 million–3 million kip. The latter article had been added in 2005 in the light of the Committee's concluding observations.

18. Other laws, such as those concerning elections, education and property, also included provisions that were consistent with the definition in article 1 of the Convention, although its precise wording was not explicitly reflected.

19. With regard to the establishment of an independent national human rights institution, the Government was currently focusing its efforts on strengthening existing national mechanisms and procedures for dealing with human rights issues, such as the National Assembly complaint procedure, the judiciary, the Human Rights Centre of the National

Social Sciences Academy, and the Human Rights Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Inter-agency arrangements dealing with specific human rights issues included the National Committee on Reporting under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the National Commission for the Advancement of Women, the National Committee for Mothers and Children, the National Committee for Disabled People, the National Committee against Human Trafficking, and the National Committee on the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Universal Periodic Review. The Government was currently establishing a national committee on human rights coordination, which would be chaired by the Minister attached to the Office of the President and would replace the existing National Committee on the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Universal Periodic Review. It would be responsible for human rights treaties that were not yet covered by a committee mandate.

20. The Government fully understood the important role of national human rights institutions based on the Paris Principles. However, human, financial and other resources and a national supporting structure were required for the establishment of such an institution. The limited human and financial resources available imposed constraints on the Government's current ability to establish an institution.

21. According to articles 31 and 32 of Presidential Ordinance No. 1/PO (2009), the provisions of the Convention were directly applicable unless they were contrary to the Constitution or national legislation. If the provisions of domestic law were inconsistent with those of the Convention, they must be amended to comply with the Convention.

22. **Mr. Kaysong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that there had hitherto been no universally acceptable definition of an indigenous people because of the considerable difference in national approaches to the question. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognized the need to take national particularities into consideration. There was no definition in Lao legislation or policy of an indigenous people. However, the existence of 49 ethnic groups in the country had been confirmed and accepted. The groups lived together and there was no segregation.

23. The terms "majority" and "minority" were not used to designate an ethnic group. The group might be described, for instance, as an ethnic group with a large or small population. No ethnic group had played a predominant role in the country's history. According to the most recent census, the Hmong ethnic group totalled 451,946. All ethnic groups were expanding.

24. The National Assembly was authorized to receive petitions and complaints from members of the public, for instance concerning ill-treatment by public officials or unfair legal proceedings. There was also a hotline for people to report alleged acts of discrimination by officials. The complaints were submitted to the National Assembly, which was required to provide a written response.

25. **Ms. Lee** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said her Government was convinced that education was the best means to assist the population in overcoming poverty. Children in the 6–10 age group attended primary schools. Basic education consisted of primary and lower secondary education.

26. The Government hoped to achieve "education for all" goals by 2015. Enrolment rates were increasing rapidly. A total of 1,481,621 students were currently enrolled in general education, which consisted of nursery schools, kindergartens, primary education, and lower and upper secondary education. The primary school enrolment rate in 2011 had been 94.1 per cent and the target rate for 2015 was 98 per cent. The lower and upper secondary education enrolment rates had been 62.9 per cent and 33.4 per cent respectively.

27. The literacy rate in the 15–40 age group was 87 per cent and the target for 2015 was 93 per cent. The literacy rate for persons over 15 years of age was 81 per cent and the target for 2015 was 87 per cent.

28. The National Policy on Inclusive Education adopted in 2010 was based on the definition approved at the conference on “Inclusive Education: the Way of the Future” organized by the International Bureau of Education in 2008. An Education Sector Development Plan (2011–2015) had also been adopted. The Plan accorded top priority to remote and ethnic areas, and to 56 districts classified by the Ministry of Education and Sports as economically poor. Free food and accommodation were provided, and female, ethnic and poor students were prioritized for scholarships. Human rights concepts were mainstreamed into policies, strategies, plans and programmes.

29. The 2007 Education Law accorded official status to the Lao alphabet and language. Various strategies were applied to assist children in learning the language. The thirteenth Party Congress has adopted a resolution aimed at developing the Lao alphabet for ease of ethnic transcription, especially of the Hmong and Khmu languages. The National Strategy on Inclusive Education (2011–2015) provided for the use of ethnic languages and cultures in education, for the development of Lao-ethnic phrase books and other teaching and learning materials for ethnic students, and for intensive basic training courses in ethnic languages for Lao teachers assigned to teach in ethnic communities. Pilot projects had been implemented by the Ministry in cooperation with development partners and NGOs.

30. Twenty per cent of the local formal education curriculum could be devoted to the conservation of local cultures, and 40 per cent to strengthening local wisdom and skills. Non-formal education was conducted at community houses, community learning centres or temples. It was intended both for adults and for children living in remote areas.

31. Ethnic boarding schools had been operating since 1968. Their main objective was to provide education for ethnic children who lived in remote areas without educational facilities, and for poor and orphaned ethnic children. Another objective was to recruit and develop ethnic human resources. The standard national curriculum was taught without discrimination and 20 per cent of the curriculum could be devoted to strengthening local wisdom and skills. There were currently 27 ethnic schools and 7,766 students.

32. The National Policy on Inclusive Education promoted the recruitment and deployment of women, members of ethnic groups and people with disabilities as teachers and civil servants throughout the system.

33. **Mr. Diaconu** expressed concern that the only legal definition of racial discrimination in domestic legislation was to be found in the Criminal Code. Consideration should be given to incorporating into the legal system a definition which encompassed all areas of life. Given that, under the State party’s dualist system, all international instruments had to be transposed into national legislation, consideration should also be given to enacting a law providing for the direct application of the Convention by domestic courts. He asked what opportunities ethnic minority children had to study their mother tongue alongside the official language in public schools.

34. **Mr. Phommachack** (Lao People’s Democratic Republic) said that article 176 of the Criminal Code on ethnic discrimination had been adopted in 2005 in the light of the Committee’s recommendations. Further consideration would be given to the Committee’s observations in that regard.

35. **Ms. Lee** (Lao People’s Democratic Republic) said that her Government had no objection to mother-tongue language instruction for ethnic children. A consultation process on the issue was under way, but it was a complex subject that required further evidence-based research.

36. **Mr. Yiapaoheu** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that both the official language and ethnic languages were important. As a native speaker of the Hmong language, he had attended a school for ethnic groups, where he had been able to learn Lao and take advantage of the further educational and employment opportunities it had provided. The fact that most ethnic languages had only a limited written form posed a major challenge.

37. **The Chairperson**, speaking in his personal capacity, said that in multi-ethnic countries the difficult issue of minority languages could be addressed if there was the will to do so.

38. **Mr. de Gouttes** (Country Rapporteur) asked the delegation whether it could provide data on the unemployment rate among young people, in particular those from ethnic groups and remote rural areas. He would welcome more information on the Government's efforts to combat trafficking in persons and the commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls, particularly those from ethnic communities. He would also like to know what measures were being taken to combat corruption.

39. **Mr. Chanthalangsy** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that unemployment data would be submitted to the Committee in writing in due course. Trafficking in persons was a serious issue affecting all the countries in the region and required a response at the regional level. A committee established within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) had been mandated to address trafficking in persons, especially women and children, through joint, transnational action. Within the context of the Greater Mekong Subregion, efforts were also being made to involve China in the search for a comprehensive solution to the problem. His Government had concluded a bilateral treaty with Thailand on the repatriation of victims of trafficking in persons. Since victims were often required to remain in Thailand for long periods in order to appear as witnesses in criminal cases, the Government assisted local institutions in the provision of vocational training pending their repatriation.

40. **Mr. Yiapaoheu** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that combating corruption was a key priority for his Government. Following the adoption of new legislation in that regard, an anti-corruption committee had been established to oversee its implementation. Awareness-raising activities were carried out in order to encourage the general population to report corrupt practices and to file complaints with the committee. Complaints were investigated and criminal prosecutions brought where appropriate. Officials found guilty of such practices were removed from office or sentenced to prison terms. The National Assembly was also responsible for monitoring large-scale public projects to ensure compliance with anti-corruption policies. Public officials were required to make declarations concerning their assets. Civil society organizations were also actively involved in the fight against corruption.

41. **Mr. Murillo Martínez**, noting that the investigations by the armed forces into allegations concerning the murder of five children had found no evidence to support the claims, asked whether, in the interests transparency, the State party had considered opening a judicial investigation into the matter. He would like to know whether there was a system of customary law in the country and, if so, what status it had within the domestic legal system. He enquired whether the Government had considered becoming party to the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169).

42. **Mr. Chanthalangsy** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that efforts had been made to strengthen State bodies within the legislative and executive branches at all levels in order to address emerging problems such as corruption. With respect to ILO Convention No. 169, the Government's consistent position was that there was no generalized definition of indigenous peoples that applied across the whole membership of ILO.

43. **Mr. Yiapaohu** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said there were 49 different ethnic groups of various sizes in his country, but the Government did not consider any of them as minorities. The concept of majority and minority groups was unacceptable; no particular group had a dominant social position. In order to promote ethnic harmony and equality, policies had been adopted to eradicate the use of disparaging slang terms to refer to certain ethnic groups. Conflicts between different groups were not based on ethnic or racial discrimination but on specific civil or commercial matters, such as land title.

44. **Mr. Amir** asked whether there was any official academy, made up of representatives from all ethnic communities, that was responsible for codifying the Lao language with a view to strengthening national cohesion.

45. Landlocked countries, such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic, faced certain specific obstacles to development. While maritime law regulated rights relating to access to marine waters, he wondered what international legislation on inland waterways would apply to rivers in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, given that some of those rivers flowed into other, non-landlocked countries. Since the country was not covered by the provisions of maritime law, it could perhaps be compensated for its landlocked status through other measures or agreements covering shipping, fishing rights and other issues.

46. He suggested that there might be a link between levels of corruption and the landlocked nature of the country. Problems such as human trafficking and unemployment gave rise to migration into neighbouring countries, which could in turn create social problems.

47. **Mr. Yiapaohu** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that his country was indeed landlocked and perhaps at a disadvantage compared with its neighbours. However, the rivers could be harnessed to generate hydroelectric power and, taking advantage of the country's natural resources, the Government planned to provide electricity for the whole region, namely Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia.

48. The Government was also working to upgrade the national road network and build bridges. The rail network had been expanded, and there were plans to build new rail links to China, among other countries. An agreement had been concluded with Viet Nam to use one of its ports in order to gain access to the sea. His country had rich natural resources and its tourism industry was expanding. In general, he agreed with the observations made by international bodies, including suggestions on the use of rivers to compensate for a lack of access to the sea.

49. Although the Constitution had designated Lao as the official language, the use of other languages was not prohibited, and the Government encouraged ethnic groups to study and develop their own languages. The Constitution had been drafted following consultations with all Lao people, including ethnic groups, and lessons learned from other countries had also been taken into account. The conclusion drawn was that, in order to ensure good communication, Lao should be the official national language.

50. His country had legislation on the exploitation of natural resources, including the use of rivers and mining projects. The legislation provided sufficient protection to ensure the effective management of those resources.

51. On the question of corruption, he agreed with the observations made. The Government had learned a lot from the experiences of other countries. The problem was linked to migration flows and human trafficking, and the Government was busily engaged in tackling it. Hmong migrants to Thailand who had fallen victim to trafficking were repatriated to the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The Government had set up a special committee on human trafficking, cooperated with neighbouring countries and had made efforts to ensure compliance with the relevant international conventions.

52. **Mr. Ewomsan** said that he appreciated the Government's acknowledgment of the reality of human trafficking in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. He asked which ethnic groups were most affected by the problem, and whether civil society organizations were involved in efforts to tackle it.

53. **Mr. Yiapaoheu** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that he had no statistics to hand on the ethnic groups most affected by trafficking. In his experience, the majority of victims lived near the border with Thailand. The problem of trafficking affected not only ethnic minorities, such as the Hmong, but also mainstream Lao people.

54. **Mr. Chanthalangsy** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), commenting on civil society's involvement in the prevention of human trafficking, said that civil society and NGOs were active in all sectors, including education, prevention activities and reporting, but played a particularly important role in the rehabilitation of victims. Trafficking victims released abroad required rehabilitation, as well as support to reintegrate them into society once they had been repatriated.

55. **Mr. Saidou** said that the delegation's responses reflected the Government's will to implement the General Assembly resolution 48/134: the State party prioritized strengthening its national human rights mechanisms. It had also highlighted difficulties relating to human resources. Under the resolution, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) could provide technical assistance to national institutions. However, those institutions must operate in tandem with the national judicial system. In that connection, he wondered whether it would be possible to adapt a "human rights academy" to become a human rights institution compliant with the Paris Principles.

56. On the issue of freedom of expression, he noted that the courts punished cases of racially motivated hate speech. He wished to know what other measures existed, apart from the provisions of article 90 of the Criminal Code, to combat hate speech in the press and elsewhere.

57. **Mr. Phommachack** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), responding to a question on legal measures to combat racial discrimination, said that in his country all persons were equal before the law. The Government's policies and the Criminal Code were consistent with that principle. As previously stated, racial discrimination did not exist in his country. The Government was considering the possibility of enacting further provisions relating to that issue.

58. **Mr. Yiapaoheu** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), supplementing information already provided, stated that a range of national policies and laws addressed the issue of land rights. For example, all ethnic groups had the right to own land, including land allotted for housing and agricultural use. The right to own land, guaranteed by law, was important to Lao society and for development. Discrimination did not exist, as the law applied equally to everyone, including members of ethnic groups, which was important for national unity. Lao legislation covered the ownership and use of land, and inheritance rights. By 2015 the Government planned to adopt 42 laws relating to a wide range of issues, including those covered by the various international conventions.

59. **Mr. Chanthalangsy** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), responding to comments on the establishment of a human rights commission, said that his Government had already enacted a large number of laws and planned to adopt many more during the next few years. In view of that volume of legislation, he hoped that the Committee understood the Government's will to achieve progress, but also the constraints it faced. It would continue to work with OHCHR and was a member of ASEAN's Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. It planned to create a human rights institution but needed time to prepare.

60. **Mr. Thornberry** said that the Committee was interested in the operations of foreign corporations in territories where indigenous communities lived. If a corporation appropriated land under a concession, but without the consent of local villagers, and subsequently caused damage to the land, what kind of compensation was available?

61. **The Chairperson** suggested that, given the lack of time, that information could be provided in the State party's following periodic report.

62. **Mr. Yiapaohu** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), responding to a question on the impact of large-scale projects, said that the Government was taking steps to address the issue. A range of mechanisms, including legislation on the promotion of investment and a decree on compensation for persons affected by such projects, took into account the concerns of indigenous communities. The Government had also established a system of compensation under which the level of compensation could be negotiated between the corporations and villagers in the affected areas.

63. With regard to concessions, the land law set the concession period at 30 years, subject to extension. Lao legislation also defined the mechanisms for organizing compensation and environmental protection. For example, a corporation in the northern part of the country had agreed to pay US\$ 12 million to relocate villagers and build new houses and infrastructure. He invited Committee members to visit his country in order to see those developments for themselves.

64. **Mr. de Gouttes** (Country Rapporteur) thanked the delegation for a frank and open dialogue. In its concluding observations, in line with its usual practice the Committee would mention positive aspects, namely the progress made by the Government, and make recommendations regarding further efforts required in various areas, particularly the rights of ethnic minorities, education and health care for ethnic minority groups, efforts to ensure full consultation and participation, compensation, the establishment of a human rights institution and the removal of all restrictions on freedom of speech, as recommended by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

65. With regard to legal issues, the Committee would consider a recommendation on the need for a broader definition of racial discrimination than the one contained in article 176 of the Criminal Code. There was a need to adapt the Code to cover all violations linked to racial discrimination. He urged the Government to keep statistical records of racial discrimination cases.

66. **Mr. Yiapaohu** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) expressed his appreciation for the constructive dialogue and the Committee's recommendations on how to effectively implement the Convention in his country. The Government would continue the dialogue and provide clarifications.

67. As to the legal classification of discrimination and the issue of a human rights institution, the Government lacked resources but would try to implement the Convention step by step. Its policy was to build a State based on the rule of law, and he assured the Committee that it was doing its best to implement the Convention effectively. It hoped that the Committee would continue its cooperation and assist it in those efforts.

68. He called on all Lao living abroad to support and promote their homeland, aiding its development through investment. He invited them to participate in building a modern and civilized State.

69. **The Chairperson** thanked the delegation for their constructive cooperation.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.