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Summary record of the 43rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 6 October 2021, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Abdel-Moneim

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Consideration of reports *(continued)*

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant *(continued)*

Third periodic report of the Plurinational State of Bolivia (E/C.12/BOL/3; E/C.12/BOL/Q/3; E/C.12/BOL/RQ/3) (continued)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia took places at the Committee table.*
2. **The Chair** invited the delegation to resume replying to the questions raised by the Committee at the previous meeting.
3. **Ms. Navia Tejada** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the female employment rate had increased from just over 50 per cent in 2015 – compared to 75 per cent for men – to 65 per cent in 2021. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security was currently preparing the implementing regulations for legislation on women’s employment and equal pay, with a focus on women victims of violence and trafficking and single-parent households. Supreme Decree No. 4401 of 26 November 2020 also provided for the creation of employment opportunities, equal access, equal pay and equal treatment of women and men. The Ministry had concluded agreements with a number of subnational authorities to implement gender-responsive action plans for employment creation at the local level. The authorities worked with productive units in different sectors to channel young unemployed people or those without work experience, especially women, into formal jobs with employment benefits. Beneficiaries received a grant for a period of three months, or six months for persons with disabilities. Women victims of violence received an additional 1,000 bolivianos (Bs) per child. Over 30,000 persons had thus far benefited from the arrangements. By focusing efforts on formal employment opportunities for vulnerable women, the Government was seeking to reverse the feminization of poverty generated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.
4. Under the Pensions Act of 2010, the retirement age had been lowered to 58 years and by an additional year per child for women, up to a maximum of three years. The pension scheme comprised a contributory regime, a semi-contributory regime for persons who retired with low contributory pensions, and a non-contributory scheme, which provided a social protection floor for all older persons in Bolivia. Self-employed workers could participate in the pension scheme on a voluntary basis. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security conducted a range of communication and training activities to promote social security schemes. Employers who failed to pay social security contributions for their employees were liable to prosecution.
5. Several projects had been launched to address the situation of women in low-wage jobs in the informal sector. A credit scheme for women heads of households involved in productive activities financed through the Bank for Productive Development had benefited nearly 4,500 women in the period 2017–2020. Women accounted for 35 per cent of the beneficiaries of a seed capital fund established using a percentage of banks’ 2016 net profits.
6. In January 2017, the Ministry for Productive Development and the Plural Economy had adopted a sectoral plan for 2016–2020 which recognized women’s work in the plural economy, promoting shared responsibility and complementarity between women and men in the productive sector. A project to improve living conditions and empower women in the northern Amazon region supported women-led cooperative start-up enterprises marketing non-timber products from the Amazon. Domestic work was recognized in the Constitution, the Family Code and the General Labour Act as a source of prosperity to be quantified in public accounts; the legislation also provided for equal responsibility of women and men in family life.
7. Under the Unified Health System, COVID-19 tests, medication, protective equipment and treatment were provided free of charge to all persons without health insurance, which benefited informal sector workers in particular.

8. The National Refugee Commission had concluded inter-institutional agreements with the autonomous departmental governments of La Paz and Cochabamba, the Ministry of Education and municipal associations to promote the integration of refugees into the labour market.

9. **Mr. Siles Bazán** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that Act No. 251 on the protection of refugees provided for the right of refugees to take up legal residence and to be integrated into the local community. Public policies had been developed to facilitate the integration, including into the labour market, of the approximately 1,000 refugees in the country. Pending employment, refugees were entitled to a subsidy and free health care. Once refugee status was granted, refugees were given permanent residence, with all the attendant benefits and duties. Undocumented asylum seekers were issued with temporary identity documents until their refugee claim was settled.

10. **Mr. Lima Magne** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that there was a 4 per cent quota for the employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector and a 2 per cent quota for the private sector. Currently, the public sector employed over 1,800 persons with disabilities who, like their parents or caregivers working in the public sector, were protected from dismissal.

11. School enrolment had increased significantly over the past decade. While only 1.8 million children had been enrolled in education in 2010, nearly 2.7 million were enrolled in 2021. The figures for rural areas, where large numbers of schools had been built, were more than 900,000 children enrolled at present, compared with fewer than 850,000 in 2010. The Ministry of Education partnered with the National Confederation of Indigenous Women of Bolivia, departmental federations of indigenous original campesino women and other civil society organizations to promote rural school enrolment. It also cooperated with the Ministry of Government and the Ministry of Defence to meet the educational needs of persons deprived of their liberty and members of the Armed Forces and the Navy. The associated methodological guidelines placed emphasis on inclusion, equality and non-discrimination. Persons with disabilities had equal access to education.

12. **Ms. Navia Tejada** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that compliance with legal guarantees of equality in the workplace and other labour rights was verified by way of labour inspections. A project launched in 2014 as part of the Patriotic Agenda for the 2025 Bicentennial aimed at the progressive eradication of forced labour in the Chaco, Amazonia and Norte de Santa Cruz regions as part of concerted efforts to address extreme poverty. Labour inspections to monitor compliance with the legal prohibition of forced labour were frequently conducted in cooperation with local trade unions and indigenous authorities and focused particularly on women and sectors that traditionally employed indigenous people.

13. Equal opportunity measures regarding employment, remuneration and treatment in the workplace included a complaints system for cases of workplace harassment, unfair dismissal and non-payment of wages, bonuses or severance payments. In remote areas, temporary mobile offices had been set up to receive complaints, conduct inspections and provide public information and training on workers' rights. Their staff were specially trained to identify possible acts of violence against child and women workers, and any such incidents were immediately referred to the competent authorities. Greater State presence in remote areas, together with labour inspections and awareness-raising, had led to a progressive increase in wages and greater compliance with fundamental rights at work. The transient nature of some indigenous populations made it more difficult to monitor the implementation of labour legislation in their regard.

14. **Mr. Lima Magne** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that domestic legislation safeguarded the rights of persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity. A series of legal instruments made reference to 28 June as International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual/Transgender and Intersexual Pride Day and 17 May as International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. In implementation of the 2016 Act on Gender Identity, No. 807, several public and private institutions had amended their internal rules and procedures to allow the updating of name and gender on identity documents and official documents issued by the Ministry of Education, as well as

the issuance of travel documentation for transsexual and transgender persons. The changes had been developed with the participation of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual/transgender and intersexual representative organization, human rights organizations, the Office of the Ombudsman and the relevant ministries. Since Act No. 807 had entered into force, there had been much public debate about the rights of transsexual and transgender persons. The Government saw no need to adopt special regulations for that population group, as its intention was to pave the way to equality of rights for all Bolivians.

15. **Mr. Auza Pinto** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that there was legislation that protected workers from dismissal on grounds of HIV status, and HIV status could not impair the right to work. Sex workers had access to sexual and reproductive health services and medication, including for sexually transmissible infections, free of charge. Legislation also provided for biosecurity measures for health personnel caring for persons living with HIV.

16. **Mr. Siles Bazán** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that new legislation had been introduced to provide for the regularization of persons who had migrated to Bolivia for socioeconomic reasons, granting them temporary residence permits. In cases where the family group included minors, the Constitution provided for the right to family reunification. Under the temporary residence permit, migrants had the right to seek employment or set up their own business. Most refugees lived in the cities of Santa Cruz, La Paz and Cochabamba; 39 per cent were women.

17. **Ms. Huacai Zapana** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the number of working children and adolescents had been brought down from 739,000 in 2016 to 724,000 in 2019. Over the same period, the number of children in hazardous employment had fallen from 393,000 to 297,000. All in all, the percentage of working children had decreased by 13 per cent, to 9.7 per cent, during that time. Labour inspections had confirmed the successful eradication of child labour in sugar cane harvesting and mining. However, fewer inspections had been carried out in 2020 under the de facto Government and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

18. **Ms. Navia Tejada** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the right to strike and the right to trade union membership were enshrined in the Constitution. Trade unions played a crucial role in the defence, representation, support, education and culture of workers, and the Government, which was required under the Constitution to promote the formation of trade unions, fully supported their work. In the specific case of the January 2020 strike in the health sector, the organizers had announced that it might be prolonged indefinitely if their demands were not met. In response, the Constitutional Court had ruled that an indefinite strike in the health sector would jeopardize the constitutionally guaranteed right to health and life, which took precedence over the right to strike.

19. **Mr. Lima Magne** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the Ministry of Health and Sport had adopted measures to ensure that health-care services were always available. The approach of the current Government was to respect the rights of unions while upholding the Bolivian people's right to health care.

20. **Mr. Mamani Ticona** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the country's economic model, of redistribution to support the most vulnerable, had been in place since 2006. Between December 2020 and May 2021, 4 million people had benefited from payments to combat hunger. In 2020, various subsidies had been introduced, including one-off family grants of Bs 500 to 2.9 million families; a household necessities grant of Bs 400 to tackle the economic slow-down resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic; and universal grants of Bs 500, of which over 3 million had been paid. In 2019, the National Commission for Refugees had worked with the Ministry of Health and Sport to give refugees access to health centres and medicines, regardless of their financial situation. Their right to health was guaranteed without discrimination, in accordance with the country's international human rights obligations.

21. **Mr. Lima Magne** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the Ministry of the Environment and Water had implemented eight investment programmes in water and basic sanitation in the country, as a result of which over 86 per cent of the population had access to clean water and 63 per cent had basic sanitation. Over Bs 3 billion

in investment had come from the National Treasury and international sources, including the Fund for Development of the River Plate Basin, the French and German Governments and the Inter-American Development Bank.

22. **Mr. Auza Pinto** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the number of pregnancies among students had halved between 2018 and 2021 as a result of strategies to combat early pregnancy implemented by the Ministry of Health, in coordination with the Ministry of Education. In line with the 2016–2020 Strategic Plan on Sexual and Reproductive Health and the 2015–2020 Plan for the Prevention of Pregnancies in Adolescents and Young Persons, the Ministry of Education had launched a sex education programme for all students according to their level of psychosocial development and had prepared teacher training courses on the subject at all levels of education. Furthermore, the Ministry had passed a series of ministerial decisions that contained measures to prevent teenage pregnancy and guarantee pregnant students' right to an education, and had held 150 events for students and teachers related to issues including the prevention of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

23. Pursuant to Act No. 1152 on the implementation of the Unified Health System, women, children, adolescents, persons with disabilities, older persons and members of aboriginal indigenous, intercultural and Afro-Bolivian communities were given priority access to sexual and reproductive health-care services. Under the protocol for the prevention, treatment and punishment of all forms of violations of the sexual integrity of children and adolescents, victims who had become pregnant as a result of rape, incest or statutory rape were required only to provide a copy of the complaint filed in order to legally terminate the pregnancy. Lastly, the Ministry of Health and Sport had declared 2018 as the year of maternal and neonatal mortality awareness.

24. **Mr. Quelca Tarqui** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that, under the Family and Family Procedure Code, adolescents were able to marry from 16 years of age under exceptional circumstances, provided that they had permission from their parents or legal guardian or, in their absence, from the Office of the Ombudsman for Children and Adolescents. A study had been carried out of children and adolescents in forced early marriages in selected municipalities in the country in order to gather information about their situation in different cultural contexts. In June 2021, the Ministry of Education had signed an agreement with the United Nations Children's Fund and had allocated over Bs 5 million to provide comprehensive sex education in secondary schools as part of a drive to prevent forced marriage of children and adolescents. Since 2018, a series of workshops and training sessions had been carried out to promote the empowerment of women and girls regardless of social status or cultural background.

25. **Ms. Huacani Zapana** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that several systems had been set up to safeguard the rights of children and adolescents through cooperation between all levels of government, families and society. In 2021, the Ministry of Justice and Institutional Transparency had adopted guidelines for the care and protection of children under 6 years of age, which covered the prevention of all forms of violence against young children, promotion and awareness-raising on children's rights, the establishment of systems for informing children of their rights and the functioning of childcare centres.

26. **Mr. Lima Magne** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the Special Office for Combating Violence against Women would next meet in October 2021 to evaluate the implementation of public policy to combat femicide. The Plurinational Legislative Assembly had recently convened a special commission to investigate delays in handling and solving cases of femicide.

27. In May 2019, Act No. 1173 had been passed to give the police and administrative services broader powers to assist victims of violence and adopt protection measures in cases of risk. There were 156 special prosecutors' offices that dealt with gender-related, juvenile and human trafficking crimes across over 100 municipalities and work was under way to extend their purview. The Public Prosecution Service employed support staff, psychologists and social workers to provide comprehensive assistance. The Ministry of Education had taken steps to ensure that education was free from violence and to promote comprehensive

educational development, foster the dismantling of the patriarchy through awareness campaigns and implement strategies to address cultural practices that violated human rights. The Ministry of Justice offered full support in court cases concerning femicide in order to tackle the high level of impunity in such cases. Rules on criminal procedure were being amended to give better protection to victims and a bill amending the Comprehensive Act on Guaranteeing a Life Free from Violence for Women, No. 348, had been drafted recently, following extensive consultation with women, to respond to issues identified by them. Since 2016, the Government had been increasing the budgetary allocation to combating violence against women and had earmarked Bs 795 million to that end in 2021.

28. **Mr. Mamani Ticona** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that a series of measures had been taken since 2006 to reduce socioeconomic inequality, including the adoption of import restrictions and tariffs on certain goods to favour the domestic market, better conditions for the payment of tax debts and more favourable value-added tax (VAT) rates for persons on low incomes, together with the introduction of a wealth tax. A zero rate of VAT was applied to the importation of machinery and industrial equipment in order to boost domestic production.

29. The proportion of the population living in moderate poverty had almost halved between 2005 and 2019, while extreme poverty had fallen to one third of its previous level. Between 2013 and 2018, the poverty gap between indigenous and non-indigenous populations had fallen by six percentage points for both moderate and extreme poverty. There had been a significant decrease in the gap between the richest and the poorest people in rural and urban areas over the period 2005–2019. Extreme poverty among the indigenous population had halved between 2005 and 2020. Measures to reduce the gap included financial support for persons in the lowest income groups.

30. **Mr. Lima Magne** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that policies had been introduced to provide housing for persons with disabilities, older persons and single mothers. During the period 2011–2021, over 70,000 housing units had been made available to vulnerable groups in both rural and urban areas in order to reduce the housing shortage. More specifically, more than 670 Guaraní families had been provided with housing solutions over that period through housing programmes, mostly in the departments of Chuquisaca, Santa Cruz and Tarija.

31. **Mr. Auza Pinto** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that there had been a 10 percentage-point reduction in chronic malnutrition among children under 5 years of age over the period 2008–2016. The strategies implemented by the Ministry of Health and Sport included the publication of food guidelines, the provision of fortified foods and of nutrient supplements for vulnerable groups, the introduction of a law to encourage breastfeeding, the establishment of 156 nutrition units to implement nutrition strategies at the municipal level and the allocation of grants for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers on low incomes. Community and intercultural family health projects were directly targeted at indigenous communities, especially in remote areas.

32. The percentage of births that took place in hospital settings had risen to 87.5 per cent in 2015, although it had since fallen again. The Juana Azurduy grant, aimed at vulnerable persons, was one of the initiatives that had most improved outcomes among rural and indigenous populations, with 2.7 million beneficiaries between 2009 and 2021. The Intercultural Community Family Health Policy was also intended to protect vulnerable persons and had provided support to indigenous persons in 5,430 instances during the COVID-19 pandemic.

33. The Unified Health System had been set up to ensure that the approximately 51 per cent of the population without social security coverage could obtain health care. As a result, out-of-pocket spending on health care had dropped from 65 per cent in 2018 to 19 per cent in 2020. The country's gross domestic product had risen from Bs 77 billion in 2005 to Bs 337.5 billion in 2021. In the same period, annual per capita expenditure on health care had increased from US\$ 65 to US\$ 276. Public spending on primary health care now made up 37 per cent of the Government's total annual investment in health care; the average in the region was 15 per cent.

34. Following a hiatus during the most acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, in April 2021 the National Health Information System had once again begun to collect data on the number of legal abortions performed for reasons of sexual violence, risks to the woman's health or congenital malformations incompatible with life. The Strategic Plan on Sexual and Reproductive Health was being updated for the period 2021–2025. In 2015, following a constitutional ruling, a set of technical regulations on the provision of comprehensive support for victims of sexual violence had been adopted and was being applied at all levels of the health-care system.

35. **Mr. Lima Magne** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that no specific rules were in place to regulate the use of cannabis for medicinal purposes. The State Agency for Medicines and Health Technology issued special permits on a case-by-case basis.

36. **Mr. Zerbini Ribeiro Leão** (Country Rapporteur) asked whether certification of viable governance was required for the recognition of autonomous indigenous territories and, if so, whether it constituted an obstacle to the granting of such recognition.

37. **Mr. Uprimny** (Country Task Force) said that he would appreciate confirmation that the Government had plans to widen the decriminalization of abortion. It was also unclear whether the proposed comprehensive legislation on sexual and reproductive health had been adopted.

38. He would be grateful for specific figures on health-care expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product. He would also welcome the delegation's comments on the possible inequalities resulting from the fact that the Unified Health System, with 50 per cent of health-care expenditure, had to cover 70 per cent of the population, while the remaining 50 per cent of funding was devoted to just 30 per cent of the population.

39. The State party's legislation on drug use was very strict. At the same time, prisons were severely overcrowded. It would be useful to hear about any plans to increase the use of alternative measures to imprisonment for drugs-related offences.

40. **Mr. Windfuhr** (Country Task Force) said that he would welcome the delegation's comments on how the State party might enable health-care personnel to engage in strike action.

41. **Ms. Shin** said that she would be grateful for concrete details of the results of the action plans and policies implemented by the Government since 2017 in the areas of femicide, violence against women, early pregnancy and child marriage.

42. **Mr. Hennebel** said that he wished to learn about the implementation of the reparation measures that had been ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the case *I.V. v. Bolivia*, which involved the sterilization of an indigenous woman without her consent. In particular, he would be interested to hear how consent to medical treatment was defined in law.

43. The *Angulo Losada v. Bolivia* case, which was currently before the Court, had caused much debate in the State party. Had it prompted the authorities to re-examine how they conducted criminal investigations of sexual offences against minors?

44. **Mr. Lima Magne** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the process of establishing autonomous indigenous territories was subject to the oversight of the Constitutional Court, and some challenges were being experienced in that regard. The conduct of consultative referendums, which were required before such territories could be established, had been suspended owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

45. The relaxation of restrictions on abortion continued to be a topic of debate in the country. The Criminal Code adopted in 2018, which had eased the restrictions, had been swiftly repealed in the face of strong opposition from 75 per cent of the population, mobilized by the Church. The Ministry of Justice was working on the preliminary draft of legislation on sexual and reproductive health, which included provisions relating to legal abortion.

46. The repealed Code had also decriminalized drug use. The Ministry of Justice was working to reinstate the procedural elements of the Code and had already signed international

cooperation agreements to that end. Under the Code, pretrial detention would be the exception, rather than the rule, in order to reduce overcrowding in prisons.

47. In Decision No. 326/2019, the Constitutional Court had urged the Legislative Assembly to adopt, within two years of the date of the ruling, legislation regulating limitations on the right to strike in the health sector. The ruling was binding, and the legislature was working to give effect to it.

48. A robust protection policy was in place in relation to child and forced marriage. Although minors aged between 14 and 16 years were deemed capable of consenting to sexual activity, it was possible to bring cases of statutory rape in connection with offences relating to victims in that age group. Children aged under 14 years could not consent to sexual activity; if a pregnancy occurred in that age group, an offence of rape was deemed to have been committed.

49. **Mr. Mamani Ticona** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the health budget had represented 3.8 per cent of gross domestic product in 2010. By 2021, that figure had risen to 8 per cent. Similarly, in 2010, 5 per cent of the State budget had been allocated to health care; that figure had doubled to 10 per cent for 2021. Owing to increased expenditure necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, health-care spending represented 11.5 per cent of the budget in 2021.

50. **Mr. Siles Bazán** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that a mechanism had been set up, under the supervision of the Counsel General's Office, to ensure compliance with the rulings of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. A number of the reparation measures ordered in the *I.V. v. Bolivia* case had already been implemented, although some administrative difficulties had been encountered in connection with the health-related measures. In order to ensure guarantees of non-repetition, the topic of sterilization and informed consent had been included in the relevant teaching syllabuses.

51. The case concerning *Angulo Losada v. Bolivia* was at the admissibility stage and might yet be resolved amicably. The Government had submitted all the reports requested of it and was making every effort to conclude the investigation relating to the case.

52. **Mr. Lima Magne** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the Government was committed to reforming Act No. 348 with the aim of preventing serious violations of the rights of adolescent girls. The previous day, the Constitutional Court had adopted a protocol for the inclusion of gender and intersectional perspectives in the Court's processes.

53. **Ms. Crăciunean-Tatu** (Country Task Force), noting that the Juancito Pinto grant had been criticized for failing to consider the particular needs and vulnerabilities of different groups, said she would like to know whether disaggregated data were gathered on how it had addressed school dropout and illiteracy among indigenous, Afro-Bolivian and disadvantaged children; whether measures were in place to better address child labour, particularly that of children aged between 13 and 16; whether the grant would be adapted to better respond to the different beneficiaries; and how access to, and enjoyment of, education by children in rural areas was addressed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

54. According to reports, discrimination was a major obstacle to education for children with disabilities and discriminatory stereotypes were common in education settings. Furthermore, the State party lacked a comprehensive education policy and the necessary resources for that group. How was the State party planning to improve their access to education, free from discrimination, how did it intend to address inclusive education and what concrete measures had been adopted to eradicate discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes in education institutions?

55. She would welcome clarification of the status of the three regional educational curricula and whether the State party had assessed the implementation of the culturally appropriate curriculum for indigenous and aboriginal peoples; if so, what had the main findings been and how was the State party planning to address them? It would be interesting to hear how the Government had improved access to online education; what measures had been adopted to promote indigenous languages and enable the cultural participation of members of indigenous and Afro-Bolivian communities; and whether Act No. 450 of 4

December 2013 on the protection of highly vulnerable indigenous and aboriginal nations and peoples had been implemented. The delegation's comments would be welcome on access to information and communications technology for persons living in rural areas, particularly in the context of the pandemic. Lastly, she asked whether the State party had implemented measures to discourage anti-indigenous and anti-religious public discourse, punish the perpetrators and promote cultural diversity.

56. **Mr. Quelca Tarqui** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the number of beneficiaries of the Juancito Pinto grant had increased significantly since its launch in 2006, and other measures to prevent school dropout included sports and science competitions. Dropout rates had fallen from 6 per cent in 2005 to 3 per cent in 2019, and similar measures had been adopted for students in special education. The country's education model was inclusive in respect of indigenous and aboriginal children and children with disabilities. State schools existed even in very remote areas with few schoolchildren, and special education for children with disabilities had been improved through the provision of training for teachers and the employment of specialist staff. Special education was also offered at children's homes and in hospitals.

57. All teachers, including those working in special education, spoke Spanish and the local indigenous language, and student teachers received training on the needs of children with disabilities, including sign language and Braille. A quota was in place to ensure that 20 per cent of students in higher education came from indigenous or aboriginal communities, and three universities served indigenous communities in different regions of the country.

58. The de facto Government had failed to improve the education system, curtailing the school year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic without implementing a remote education strategy. It had also allowed all students to move to the next level of education automatically, thereby removing the need for them to study. Upon coming to power, the current Government had introduced a range of teaching modalities that changed according to the country's epidemiological situation. Currently, 79 per cent of education institutions were offering a mix of remote and in-person classes, and 21 per cent were working fully remotely. The Government also provided a free remote learning platform, free textbooks and classes via the radio. It had approved written alphabets for indigenous languages and designed regional curricula for education in those languages. Efforts to narrow the digital divide had included the distribution of more than 200,000 computers and 4,000 mobile telephones to students and collaboration with a telecommunications company to ensure connectivity across the country.

59. **Mr. Lima Magne** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the majority of Bolivians identified as indigenous and spoke Spanish and an indigenous language. All public officials must speak, and deliver State services in, Spanish and the local language. Act No. 450 had not yet entered into force because of a lack of financial resources, and a number of ministries and State bodies were working to remedy that situation. Act No. 164 of August 2011 on telecommunications and information and communications technology allowed State resources to be used to promote access to digital services for vulnerable populations, with the aim of providing subsidized access in all municipalities, including via satellite technology in areas where physical telephone lines could not be installed.

60. With regard to discriminatory public discourse, the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had recommended that a national summit should be held to identify the causes of racism and discrimination, and a number of committees were working to implement that recommendation. The Government maintained a policy of referring to the country's institutions and democratic bodies with respect, and he urged other political actors to do likewise.

61. **Ms. Crăciunean-Tatu** (Country Task Force) asked whether the Government had disaggregated data on school dropouts in 2021, how many children had been affected by the transition to online education, what the effects had been of such a prolonged interruption to their education and whether teachers had adapted classes to online learning.

62. **Mr. Lima Magne** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the de facto Government's decision to curtail the school year in 2020, despite the willingness of teachers and civil society to work with it to provide education, represented a grave

violation of children's human rights. Moreover, it had failed to comply with a constitutional ruling obliging it to resume the school year. No data had been gathered on dropouts in 2021. Children in municipalities where COVID-19 infection rates were low could attend school, while children in areas where rates were higher could access education remotely thanks to digital inclusion programmes and information and communications technology equipment donated by civil society, and children were rewarded for their participation. The Government planned to give food vouchers to the parents of schoolchildren.

63. **Mr. Zerbini Ribeiro Leão** (Country Rapporteur) said that he greatly valued the frank and open dialogue with the delegation, particularly given the exceptional circumstances under which it had taken place. He hoped that the Committees' recommendations would contribute to strengthening the State party and affirming the human dignity of its people.

64. **Mr. Lima Magne** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking via video link, said that the State party would avoid further delays in submitting reports to the Committee. He invited the Committee to visit his country, and drew particular attention to the reforms under way in the Ministry of Justice and Institutional Transparency that would enable the full implementation of human rights. The Committee played an important role in his country's jurisprudence, and he hoped that, with its assistance, and that of the international community, the obstacles hindering the enjoyment of human rights would be overcome.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.