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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

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SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)* OF THE 41st MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 12 November 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. TEXIER

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 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 (continued)
(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. Mr. GLORIA JR. (Philippines), responding to questions posed by Committee members at the previous meeting regarding articles 10 to 12 of the Covenant, explained that three forms of contract work existed in the Philippines: job contracting, or independent contracting, carried out by companies with all the necessary means to do so; employment per project, under a form of contract that expired automatically on the specified project completion date; and mere supply of labour without regard for labour standards, which was illegal. Labour inspection was undertaken by 16 regional offices, employing 208 labour inspectors. In 2007, 24,375 establishments had been inspected; 18,698 had been inspected in 2008 up to September. In total, 700,000 establishments were registered. In addition to routine inspections, specific inspections were undertaken if a complaint was received and were accorded higher priority. If violations of labour standards were identified through either type of inspection, steps were taken immediately. He gave details of the procedure.
3. Acknowledging that, as facilities intended specifically to attract foreign investment, export processing zones (EPZs) were given special treatment in many respects, he explained that they established their own administrative offices which were responsible for all matters concerning the EPZ, including compliance with labour legislation. In the event of a violation, the administrative office would inform the regional department of labour, which would order an inspection. It was not in the interests of EPZ administrative offices to conceal violations, as employees or competitors could report violations anyway. The special treatment afforded to EPZs did not exempt them from complying with legislation, nor did it undermine the social security, occupational safety and health, and trade union rights of workers.
4. The exemption under the law on child abuse allowing children to be employed with parental consent was intended to provide parents and guardians with a degree of leeway in permitting their children to perform certain kinds of work. If, however, parents or guardians allowed or forced their children to engage in work that prejudiced their mental or physical health, was illegal, or contradicted public policy, good morals, tradition or public order, the exemption would not apply and they would be prosecuted.
5. Ms. CAPONES (Philippines) said that, given the nature of the sectors in which Philippine workers were employed overseas, the global financial crisis would have a limited effect on overseas workers and their remittances. Ageing populations in Western countries would continue to require health care; the boom in oil-rich nations had generated a great deal of employment in construction work; and many Filipinos in the United States worked in sectors less sensitive to

recession. In addition, the 2008 target of 10 per cent growth in remittances from overseas workers had already been substantially exceeded. Nevertheless, she listed certain groups of overseas workers who could be affected by the financial crisis, for whose benefit the Government had already put in place an action agenda to provide them with support in returning to the Philippines and finding alternative employment.

6. The latest poverty statistics, based on data from 2006, showed that 14.6 per cent of the population, or 12.2 million people, lived below the subsistence threshold, while 32.9 per cent, or 27.6 million, lived below the poverty line. The figures were higher than in 2003 but lower than in 2000. The Government had taken various measures to reduce poverty, focusing on health, education, housing, hunger mitigation and job creation. Hunger was being tackled both by increasing the supply and availability of food and by trying to increase household incomes. Other interventions were directed towards strengthening nutrition-oriented food demand, managing population growth and mitigating the impact of higher prices. Everything was being done with full respect for the provisions of the Covenant.

7. Clarifying apparent inconsistencies in the country's poverty statistics, she explained that, while the World Bank's definition of poverty was used for statistics that would be compared internationally, for domestic purposes the Philippines used its own definition, based on the minimum income and expenditure required for subsistence. The figure of 36 per cent cited in the delegation's opening statement had been taken from the Human Development Report 2007/2008 published by the United Nations Development Programme. As a result of increasing prices and insufficient rises in general income, poverty was worsening despite economic growth. External factors, such as higher oil prices, also played a role, as had Government moves to reduce the fiscal deficit by expanding and increasing value added tax. Family formation had risen more than personal income, reducing the average income of families between 2003 and 2006.

8. By 2015 the Philippines was likely to meet the Millennium Development Goals on extreme poverty and hunger, child mortality, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and access to safe drinking water and sanitary toilet facilities. More efforts were needed in order to reach the remaining targets. The low percentage of the State budget devoted to housing could be explained by the fact that housing construction was essentially in the hands of the private sector, even if some corporations were Government-owned. The Government simply provided an enabling environment for private investment in socialized and economic housing programmes.

9. Mr. GARCIA (Philippines) said that, as part of measures to improve prison conditions, a proposal had been made to increase the budget for food procurement from 50 to 90 pesos per person per day. The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology had initiated programmes to redistribute inmates, which would also ease the food situation, and support was being sought from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to improve prison operation, including through the "Adopt A Jail" programme, which was proving popular.

10. Under Executive Order No. 708 of 26 February 2008, the clearing of houses had been devolved to local government units. Guidelines had been issued to be followed by local government units in creating local housing boards and to ensure that evictions were performed in conformity with international human rights instruments and without leading to violations of

other human rights. It was anticipated that the situation might initially worsen in the wake of devolution, but it should be borne in mind that the policy of local government autonomy must be respected, that local housing boards represented all affected parties, and that the guidelines adhered fully to the Committee's general comment No. 7 on forced evictions.

11. Mr. CATURA (Philippines) added that local housing boards, which it was proposed to create in all areas, would ensure regular allocation of funds to benefit the homeless and underprivileged.

12. Given the various problems with inter-agency coordination on housing and forced evictions, in respect of which certain alleged violations were being investigated, he drew attention to a working partnership established between the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor and the Philippines Commission on Human Rights, under which the latter would be involved in investigating human rights violations during evictions and demolitions and, it was hoped, would produce monitoring reports that would help decrease the number of unlawful evictions. The Memorandum of Agreement establishing the partnership clearly set out the Philippines' obligations under the Covenant, in particular article 11. In addition, the Metro Manila Inter-Agency Committee had proposed more effective and efficient programmes for informal settlers in Metro Manila, ensuring full respect for their human rights during displacement activities.

13. The Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor had increased its efforts to make social preparations for families affected by upcoming land and housing projects in a manner that allowed them and other stakeholders to participate in a meaningful way. Those efforts, combined with adequate social economic analysis, were crucial to the success of resettlement projects. The budget for social preparation activities had been increased and a considerable initial sum had already been appropriated.

14. The question of housing evictions should be seen against the background of the need for development and the phenomenon of "professional" informal settlers. That term designated informal settlers who would not move from land allocated for major projects, as had happened at the Mindanao industrial estate, despite having received money from the Government to resettle elsewhere and although relocation sites had been provided, until they were also paid by incoming companies. He hoped that the Committee would take those factors into account when making its recommendations.

15. Mr. LEPATAN (Philippines) said that trade subsidies on agricultural products in developed countries had a greater impact on small farmers than trade liberalization. Moreover, as developed countries gave preferential treatment to least developed countries, exports from developing countries were not able to compete as they were subject to duty. That situation had severely affected the export of bananas and canned tuna from his country to Europe. However, the developing countries recognized the need of the least developed countries to achieve development and expressed solidarity with them.

16. Ms. MENDOZA (Philippines) said that the unemployment rate was 8 per cent and the underemployment rate 21 per cent in 2008. Between 2000 and 2005, male life expectancy at birth had risen by 1.5 years to 67.8 years and female life expectancy had risen by 0.9 years to 72.5 years. Malnutrition among schoolchildren had declined by six percentage points to 24.6 in 2005.
17. The incidence of hunger had risen to 18.4 per cent in the third quarter of 2008, affecting 3.3 million families. The Government had launched an accelerated hunger mitigation programme in 2006 that sought to address the supply-and-demand aspects of hunger and included interventions to strengthen nutrition-oriented food demand and manage population growth. Moreover, it had initiated various measures to mitigate the impact of high food prices on poor households and vulnerable sectors. Those measures included expanding subsidized rice distribution, importing rice to fill the gap between supply and demand and preventing hoarding by rice-traders.
18. In metropolitan Manila, 14.3 per cent of households had no access to safe drinking water. In response, the Government had set a target of providing potable water for the entire country by 2010 and had identified various strategies to achieve that aim, including taking priority action for 200 villages without water in metropolitan Manila and 200 waterless municipalities outside it, through private-sector and public investment; ensuring that all villages and municipalities provided with water services had corresponding facilities for wastewater and sewage disposal; promoting private sector and public investment in water provision; and conducting studies on groundwater resources and vulnerability.
19. Ms. VERSOZA (Philippines) said that special legislation on rape had been introduced in response to lobbying by women's groups. Under the Anti-Rape Law of 1997, rape was no longer considered a crime against chastity but against the person, in order to encourage reporting; moreover, the new Law expanded definitions of rape. Work was under way to amend the clause forgiving marital rape, which had been included as a concession. Considerable prioritization was needed in order to address women's issues on the legislative agenda, which included the Magna Carta for Women and a reproductive health bill.
20. With regard to measures taken to address trafficking in persons, the Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking had a strategic plan covering prevention, protection and prosecution, recovery, return and repatriation. In addition, some NGOs had introduced preventive initiatives to address the demand side of trafficking, such as raising awareness among college students that prostitute women were victims of violence and that it was, therefore, undesirable to engage their services. Her Government championed anti-trafficking at international meetings, placing particular emphasis on the demand side of trafficking. A number of other preventive measures had been introduced, including the Men Opposed to Violence against Women Everywhere campaign and roadshows to explain about anti-trafficking to various groups, which had led to some anti-trafficking convictions.
21. The Anti-Violence against Women and Their Children Act of 2004 provided for a range of penalties for perpetrators. It was difficult to curb rape and other forms of violence against women as doing so required established cultural practices and beliefs about power relations

between men and women, which lay at the root of violence against women, to change. Concerted efforts were needed in order to bring about the necessary change. With regard to divorce, a bill was pending but appeared not to be a priority in Congress.

22. In connection with sexual reproductive health, maternal mortality rates had declined from 209 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 1993 to 162 in 2006. Maternal health concerns had been addressed by the provision of health services to pregnant women and family planning services. In addition, the Department of Health had carried out initiatives to promote maternal and newborn health and family planning based on responsible parenting, respect for life, birth spacing and informed choice. Key policy reforms, including a shift to the emergency obstetric care approach and promotion of facility-based deliveries, had also reduced maternal mortality.

23. Although progress had been achieved, her country would find it difficult to meet Millennium Development Goal targets. The Department of Health had drafted policy guidelines in 2008 to rapidly reduce maternal and neonatal deaths through the local implementation of an integrated maternal, neonatal and child health and nutrition strategy which aimed to increase rates of contraceptive use, antenatal visits, skilled birth attendant and facility-based deliveries and fully immunized children.

24. Various stakeholders were lobbying Congress to pass a reproductive health bill and the topic had given rise to considerable debate. Government policy was to reduce the population growth rate to 1.9 per cent and local government units were responsible for providing reproductive health information and services. A case had been brought by a number of women, supported by an NGO, against a former Mayor of Manila who had banned contraceptives. It would serve as a test case for the courts to determine whether women's right to health was curtailed by that ban.

25. Mr. LEPATAN (Philippines) said that the Human Rights Council view that the problem of violence against women was global and serious had been underscored during the previous universal periodic review (UPR), at which it had appeared that the most serious problem existed in a developed Christian country. The UPR exercise was valuable as it allowed countries to share their problems and learn from the experience of others.

26. Ms. DECENA VALDEZ (Philippines) said that her Government was implementing a number of anti-trafficking programmes, in addition to preventive measures. The Initiative against Trafficking in Persons was composed of a series of nationwide initiatives including roadshows, training for service providers, press conferences and coordination meetings with local government units. In addition, a model local ordinance had been drafted and awaited approval; it was hoped that local government would pass ordinances based on that model to create strong local laws against trafficking. Moreover, a manual on law enforcement and prosecution, which consisted of a step-by-step guide to the surveillance, apprehension and prosecution of traffickers, was due for publication.

27. Furthermore, the Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking would establish regional offices. The Council offered training to service providers involved in the protection of trafficked women and children and had drafted guidelines on the protection of trafficked children, in addition to a manual on recovery and integration.

28. The Ninoy Aquino International Airport Task Force against Trafficking in Persons had been launched. The Task Force was composed of police and other law enforcement officials at the airport and investigated trafficking cases at the airport, intercepted undocumented passengers, assisted trafficking victims and filed cases against traffickers.
29. The “We are not for sale (victims of human trafficking speak up)” project addressed government officials, in particular those in immigration involved in procedures for migrant workers. The project consisted of three phases, namely, the protection and reintegration of victims, local prosecutions against those involved in violation of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, regardless of their position, and prosecution of foreign recruiters. Under the project, victims of human trafficking worked with immigration officials and others in Government to protect and reintegrate victims, to help victims to file complaints against traffickers and to give preferential placement in work abroad to former victims of trafficking. The Department of Justice also sometimes afforded protection to trafficking victims through its witness protection programme. The project also assisted in the prosecution at the local level of persons involved in trafficking. To date, two immigration officers had been charged thanks to action taken as part of the project. As to the prosecution of foreign recruiters, complaints had been filed against two Singaporean nationals in Malaysia who had victimized hundreds of Philippine women. That was the first time the Philippines Government had attempted such legal action against foreign nationals in another State.
30. Over 550 trafficking cases had been referred to the courts for prosecution; 36 per cent were awaiting trial and 35 per cent had been submitted for resolution to the prosecutors’ offices. Eleven cases had resulted in convictions, including three involving minors. The main destination countries for trafficking were Middle Eastern States, and Malaysia.
31. Mr. LUCENTALES (Philippines) said that the Philippines had adopted legislation to help persons with disabilities, including the Accessibility Law, which mandated the installation of disability-friendly physical structures, and the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, aimed at helping ensure equal opportunities for disabled people. Disabled persons were not hired by virtue of their disabilities, but on merit; to ensure equality of opportunity, they were given access to education and vocational training. The Government supported private-sector initiatives that created employment opportunities for the disabled. Deaf-mutes, blind people and orthopaedically handicapped persons were given specific employment opportunities in the service sector, and other disabled people worked in information technology. The Philippine Civil Service Commission had called for 5 per cent of public-service manpower requirements to be filled by disabled persons, and progress in that direction had been encouraging. The National Council for Disability Affairs reported directly to the Office of the President. It not only provided rehabilitation services, but also worked to strengthen structures and institutions for participation by disabled persons in society.
32. The Government considered that the elderly were an important human resource, and should contribute to nation-building. The Senior Citizens Act provided avenues for participation of the elderly and ways of meeting their needs, including discounts for food, medicines, entertainment, vacation expenses and public transport. Each local government unit had an Office for Senior Citizen Affairs, and a national monitoring board ensured that the elderly enjoyed all the benefits to which they were entitled by law. The Congress was currently holding deliberations on a bill that would grant pension benefits to the elderly.

33. The Government had a disaster risk management policy aimed at removing communities from areas of risk. Strict regulations for human settlements included certification procedures for safe habitat sites, and there were also mechanisms for river basin disaster mitigation and for crop insurance. Community and family disaster preparedness training sessions were continuously held, and the Local Government Code authorized the earmarking of 5 per cent of local internal revenue allocations for calamity funds to deal with natural disasters.

34. Mr. QUILAMAN (Philippines) said that the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act addressed both individual and collective rights. For collective rights, the Act provided four groups, or “bundles”, of rights: to ancestral domains, to self-governance and empowerment, to social justice and human rights, and to cultural integrity. The right to ancestral domains provided indigenous peoples with security of tenure, and protected the integrity of the ancestral domains as the material basis of their cultural integrity. Ancestral domains were private, communal property which belonged to all generations, and therefore could not be sold or destroyed. The right to such domains included the right to develop their natural resources and to regulate entry of migrants. The right to self-governance and empowerment ensured that indigenous political, social, economic and cultural rights were respected and recognized, with capacity-building mechanisms and participation in decision-making processes. It included the right to have a justice system, a system for conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes, and the right to take part in decision-making, to determine development priorities, to create tribal barangays, to form collective organizations and to access means for development. The right to social justice ensured non-discrimination, provided for the enjoyment of basic human rights, and ensured that any form of coercion of indigenous peoples would be dealt with by the law. The right to cultural integrity ensured the protection of the cultural artefacts of indigenous peoples, including their communities’ intellectual property rights, traditions and practices and biological and genetic resources. It also protected their educational system, recognized cultural diversity, ensured access to cultural sites and ceremonies and access to biological and genetic resources, and provided for the right to receive funds from the Government for archaeological and historical work.

35. The provisions of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act were progressively being implemented by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, which by October 2008 had issued 84 certificates of ancestral domain titles covering over 2 million hectares, and 184 certificates of ancestral land titles covering 6,420 hectares. The Commission was currently handling cases involving another 3 million hectares, and it was hoped that by the end of 2008 it would have resolved cases covering a total of 5 million hectares, or about 67 per cent of the ancestral domain areas in the country. The country’s overall land area was about 30 million hectares. Sustainable development and protection plans had been formulated for some 70 ancestral domains; such plans were drawn up by the indigenous communities themselves.

36. In respect of empowerment and self-governance, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples had established 66 consultative bodies nationwide. Such bodies included traditional leaders, representatives of the elderly, of resettled communities, and of indigenous peoples’ organizations, and private councils. The Commission regularly consulted such bodies, and had done so just a few days previously to confer with them about the implementation of economic, social and economic rights and the presentation of the Government’s periodic report. In 2006, the Commission and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) had conducted a field

assessment of the situation of indigenous children, youth and women, and had determined that one reason for the lack of services reaching indigenous peoples was their failure to be represented in local executive bodies. As a result, as a pilot project, the Commission had established mandatory representation of indigenous peoples in dozens of local governments.

37. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples had issued 154 certificates of precondition attesting to the free and prior informed consent of indigenous peoples for certain activities on their lands or domains, and had also issued 678 certificates of non-overlap, meaning that the lands in question did not overlap with ancestral domains. It had provided over 25,000 educational assistance grants between 2001 and 2008 and had helped to document cases in which indigenous children had been involved in armed conflict and to provide such children with assistance in demobilization and rehabilitation in their communities. The Commission had provided health services for some 66,000 members of indigenous communities and had supported over 900 cultural and social development projects addressing livelihood and entrepreneurship, traditional crafts and basic services. It had assisted 169 indigenous community schools and had helped to formulate UNICEF's programme for the southern Philippines for the period from 2010 to 2014. An indigenous peoples' women and peace in development programme had highlighted the role of indigenous women in conflict resolution and had strengthened the indigenous peoples' civil registration services. The Commission had set up 12 regional hearing offices, had provided legal services to over 1,600 people and had resolved nearly 300 legal cases.

38. The Commission also had a range of programmes to protect the cultural integrity of indigenous groups. In respect of conflict resolution, the Commission encouraged community-based processes so as to avoid recourse to its own quasi-judicial procedures.

39. Mr. ABRENILLA (Philippines) said that while it was difficult to assess the impact on poverty reduction of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), the CARP impact assessment studies had demonstrated that there had been a positive impact on farmer beneficiaries. CARP had apparently raised income and reduced poverty among that group between 1990 and 2000. Real income had risen by over 12 per cent, and the poverty rate had declined from 47.6 per cent to 45.2 per cent. The members of households with agrarian reform beneficiaries also had better access to safe water and a higher level of education than did members of other households.

40. Mr. SA`DI, noting that a bill on divorce was being introduced, asked whether divorce would be viewed as a right, in the same way as marriage. He expressed concern that parents and guardians had so much leeway in determining what type of work children could undertake, since those suffering from poverty would be less demanding with regard to the children's working conditions than otherwise. On housing, noting that he had seen pictures of the housing units from which forced evictions were taking place and that they were substandard and unfit for human habitation, he suggested that alternative housing should be provided before evictions took place. Noting a comment by the delegation that housing was a private-enterprise function, he said that social housing should in fact be the concern of the Government.

41. Mr. KERDOUN requested details of the results to date of the Long-Term Higher Education Development Plan 2001-2010 formulated by the Commission on Higher Education and asked whether the State party believed that the four goals of the Plan as enumerated in

paragraph 879 of the periodic report would be achieved in the remaining two years. Noting that data had been provided in the periodic report on public higher-education institutions only despite the fact that the vast majority were private, he requested further information on private institutions, including fees. He asked how the Government intended to address the problem of poor quality of teaching at primary, secondary and higher education levels, suggesting that incentives such as training, career and promotion plans would be advisable. Noting that the State party's written replies to questions 42 and 43 of the list of issues, in which the Committee had requested information on measures to provide primary and secondary education to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, had been restricted to education of Muslim children in the Madrasah system in the Muslim Mindanao Autonomous Region only because of the agreement signed with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, he requested further details on other groups, such as indigenous children, and wondered whether politics had taken precedence in the provision of education to such groups.

42. Mr. DASGUPTA said that, while the State party was to be congratulated for being among the first countries in Asia to provide universal access to primary education, certain negative factors remained. Although education was compulsory and free of charge, the dropout rate was nevertheless high, with approximately a third of all children not completing primary education. He requested details of specific measures that were being taken to make education truly compulsory and, given that two of the explanations for the high dropout rate provided in the periodic report were poor nutrition and lack of financial capability, asked whether a school-meal subsidy scheme existed. He wondered whether there was a link between dropout rates and child labour and whether employment was hindering primary education especially among boys, given that, in a survey mentioned in the report, the reason most frequently cited by boys for not attending school was that of employment concerns. Noting that the admission in the periodic report that the quality of basic Philippine education had been deteriorating continuously was surprising given that the State party was experiencing good rates of growth, he asked what measures were being taken to rectify and reverse that problem and to ensure that all citizens, especially the poorest, enjoyed the benefits of economic growth.

43. Ms. BARAHONA RIERA asked for a reply to the request for information on regulations or draft legislation on the distribution of assets between separated partners, given that divorce was prohibited, in order to correct the inequality between men and women, and on the situation of children whose parents separated.

44. Mr. CATURA (Philippines), in response to an earlier question about budget allocations, said that under the General Appropriations Act the Department of Education received the largest of all allotments, and the latest figures showed that 76 per cent of its budget was allocated to personal services and 12 per cent to other expenses. Regular training courses were provided for teachers to ensure quality and to allow teachers to qualify for increased wages, in order to discourage the current phenomenon of highly qualified teachers leaving the country to work abroad as nannies or domestic workers for a better salary. A total of 80 per cent of all elementary and secondary teachers had recently received training on the basic education curriculum; 25,000 had been trained in English, science and mathematics and 8,775 in other subjects, particularly with the aim of strengthening the use of English as the language of instruction at primary and secondary levels. A preschool education programme had been launched in June 2005 for children aged between 5 and 6 years in order to include the preschool level in the education system, and had been expanded to cover children in day-care centres. The dropout rate for

elementary education had declined from 2.02 per cent in 2005 to 1.7 per cent in 2007, and a major factor in that reduction had been the Food for School Programme through which families were provided with food to enable their children to attend school. At the tertiary level, the Ladderized Education System provided technical and vocational education. As a result of programmes to improve education, 100 per cent of schools now had computers and 26 per cent access to the Internet. Of approximately 62,000 university students, scholarships and loans were provided to 8,000 poor and deserving students to allow completion of four- or five-year degree programmes. Efforts were continuing to ensure that all university teachers were qualified to Masters level or higher and that they passed an examination. The Madrasah education system was a vital component of the Government's obligations under the peace agreement that had been signed with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in 1996, and had evolved into the larger Basic Education Madrasah programme. A Madrasah development coordination committee had been established to effectively manage financial assistance to the Madrasah system.

45. Ms. VERSOZA (Philippines) said that, in the absence of legislation on divorce, regulations were in place for legal separation and annulment, including judicial separation of property. A bill on marital infidelity and concubinage was pending, and some groups believed that that bill constituted a movement towards the adoption of legislation on divorce.

46. Mr. GLORIA JR. (Philippines), in response to the questions about housing, said that Government initiatives had been taken to improve housing conditions for squatters, and that the view generally taken was that the urban poor were partners in as well as beneficiaries of housing programmes, meaning that they were compelled to participate actively in the process of resolving housing problems. The Government's policy was that no evictions or demolitions could be undertaken without sufficient preparation of social housing.

47. Ms. BASILIO (Philippines) thanked the Committee for its keen interest in the status of economic, social and cultural rights in the State party and for the intensive, fruitful and open dialogue during the review process. The delegation had endeavoured to provide comprehensive answers to the Committee's questions. Much remained to be done, particularly in terms of certain gaps in national legislation and effective implementation of existing legislation. The State party was committed to working closely with civil society and with the Committee, whose concluding observations would form the basis of nationwide consultations, in order to enable all Filipinos to enjoy their rights to the maximum extent possible. She expressed the hope that dialogue and cooperation with the Committee would continue and that further progress would be made in time for the next periodic report, which would be submitted in a timely and efficient manner.

48. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the State party, and commended it on the great interest expressed in economic, social and cultural rights, as demonstrated by the large delegation, and on the fact that civil society had been well represented.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 12.20 p.m.