



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 2686th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 29 November 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Amir

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Combined sixth to eighth periodic reports of Honduras (continued)
(CERD/C/HND/6-8; CERD/C/HND/Q/6-8)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Honduras took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Zúniga** (Honduras) said that almost 65 per cent of the Honduran population lived in poverty, with 40 per cent living in extreme poverty. Poverty was structural and disproportionately affected the most vulnerable populations, including the indigenous and Afrodescendent populations. The Government had identified child malnutrition, teenage pregnancy, geographic isolation and vulnerability to climate change as poverty traps, and it was important to understand the dynamic behind those factors in order to properly address the situation. In recent years, three significant events had taken place: the creation of the Better Life Platform, the establishment of the National Centre for Information on the Social Sector and the move in State planning from a generic to strategic results-based approach in such sectors as infrastructure and governance.

3. The Better Life Platform was administered by the recently established Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion through four directorates, which developed social programmes in accordance with the Platform requirements. Those programmes included Honduras for All, which addressed issues faced by persons with disabilities; programmes targeted at indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples and vulnerable groups, including vulnerable adults; and programmes designed to address poverty traps, such as teenage pregnancy, early childhood issues and public policy matters. The most recent programme to be introduced was the Women's City Presidential Programme. The Ministry had also established rural and urban transport programmes for persons with disabilities and a food solidarity programme. All programmes managed by the directorates came under the four pillars of the Better Life Platform, namely the guarantee of a minimum income, healthy housing, food and nutritional security, and opportunities and skills. The Platform was a minimum threshold for social protection, designed to respond to all the challenges of poverty in Honduras more effectively; previously, poverty had been discussed in general terms without the concrete responses necessary to resolve it.

4. The Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion had four mandates or strategic goals: coordination and evaluation of public policies in the sphere of social protection and poverty reduction; better support for vulnerable populations through integration, with joined-up input from the public and private sectors; reduction of extreme poverty and of inequality among families in vulnerable situations; and the improvement of well-being and increased empowerment and skills so that those living in extreme poverty, vulnerable situations or situations of social exclusion could fully enjoy their rights.

5. When the process of creating the Better Life Platform had begun in 2014, following a presidential initiative to tackle poverty, consultations had been held with stakeholders, leading to an understanding that insufficient action was being taken to reduce poverty and that the social programmes currently in place were not sufficient. The Government had therefore decided to set up a second subplatform called Better Families, in order to reach families and provide the full cycle of social support. Specific support programmes had been put in place in order to tackle the very high teenage pregnancy rates recorded in recent years.

6. The Better Life Platform had cross-cutting themes, including gender, intercultural issues and disabilities. The work of the Better Life Platform was now centred on those issues within families, and that focus had improved the effectiveness of the platform. In 2015, the Government had carried out a new multidimensional poverty census, which measured poverty in four areas: health, education, labour and housing. Within those areas, 15 different indicators were monitored, and the results contributed to a better understanding of poverty in the country. After carrying out the poverty analysis, the Government was able to work through the Better Life Platform to improve resilience, prevent families living in

poverty from falling through the net and give them a route out of poverty, primarily through dynamic labour markets and education beyond primary level.

7. Working through the National Centre for Information on the Social Sector, the Government had improved follow-up on poverty reduction programmes. Administrative registers had been established, and now included the data of millions of Hondurans, disaggregated by sex, age and ethnic origin. New technologies were improving the database, so that it was possible to monitor progress, costs and budgets in real time.

8. Honduras had been one of the first countries in Latin America to decide to adopt an integrated approach to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. To that end, pilot programmes had been set up in the Lempira and Intibucá departments, covering large numbers of Lenca people. Normally, all public policy was created at the level of Congress. However, under the new programmes, the municipalities, all of which included a Lenca population, were working together with families to create policy that would allow implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

9. The Better Life Platform had currently reached approximately two thirds of indigenous and Afro-Honduran households, totalling some 430,000 persons. The National Centre for Information on the Social Sector was responsible for conducting a socioeconomic census, which provided the numbers of people who were not currently being reached. In the last five years, out of the nine ethnic groups, shortfalls in coverage had been eliminated for between three and four groups, and the Government hoped to increase that number to six or seven. The platform managed by the National Centre for Information on the Social Sector was in the public domain, and the data were disaggregated by identity and political affiliation; it was therefore possible to verify that supporters of all political parties, as well as unaffiliated voters and non-voters, were covered by the programme. In terms of landownership, of the 11.5 million hectares in Honduras, 2.5 million had been granted to indigenous peoples and Afro-Hondurans. Better access to education for indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples was ensured through a presidential programme providing grants for further and higher level study in various sectors. Over 3,000 such grants had been provided to indigenous persons and Afro-Hondurans.

10. **Mr. Nájera** (Honduras) said that the bill on free, prior and informed consultation with indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples was of vital importance in the Government's daily work, because such consultation was key to the social, economic and productive development of the country. The Government had realized that, with social consultation, a better level of development could be achieved. For example, Honduras now had one weapons-free department, and one municipality with no homicides or robberies. The bill would help ensure human dignity and real equality. Infrastructure projects, for example in the energy sector, were never approved without the full support of all affected ethnic groups. On 1 December 2018, a discussion of the bill with all ethnic groups would be launched, and no legislation would be adopted if it hindered the aim of eradicating poverty within groups that had traditionally been neglected. Within the next year, all 18 departments would have full access to electricity, including the Mosquitia region where the Garífuna, Miskito and Tawahka peoples lived. For the first time, the central Government was paying greater attention to those ethnic groups, by providing funding, infrastructure, energy, and by guaranteeing personal, food and legal security so that all groups had the same opportunities as people living in large cities. The Government was committed to ensuring that free, prior and informed consultation took place with the nine ethnic groups and with Afro-Hondurans.

11. **Ms. Castañeda** (Honduras) said that, regarding the large-scale movement of individuals towards the United States of America, the President of the Republic had held a number of different meetings with the Presidents of Mexico and Guatemala and had requested that the human rights of those involved, Hondurans and people of other nationalities, be respected. A team had been set up with individuals from different State institutions whose overarching aim was to ensure the protection of those persons in line with international standards and to ensure that those who wished to return could do so in a safe manner. Although it was not possible to provide the ethnic breakdown of the individuals involved, as they were not recorded in migrant registers, some data did exist on the identity of returnees.

12. A number of different measures had been adopted in order to achieve reaccreditation of the Office of the National Commissioner for Human Rights with category A status. The Office had enjoyed that status until 2011, when it was downgraded to category B. In 2014, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions had made a number of recommendations. The Office had responded to each one, and examined the information it had received concerning appointments of individuals, immunity, pluralism, sufficient resources, cooperation with other human rights bodies and interaction with the international system of human rights. The Office had requested an assessment to regain its category A status.

13. The National Commission against Racial Discrimination, Racism, Xenophobia and Other Related Forms of Intolerance was currently being reactivated at the national level, and a number of actions had been taken to that end. Support had been requested from the coordination committee to allow the decree establishing the Commission to be revised. That was a very complex process and one of the main obstacles preventing reactivation, but there was now an opportunity to carry out the necessary revision. The Commission had been created in 2004, as a discussion forum aimed at eliminating racial discrimination at a time when there was no institution to examine public policy relating to indigenous peoples. Such an institution, the Directorate for Indigenous and Afro-Honduran Peoples, was now in place, as was a public policy and a plan concerning indigenous peoples. The decree establishing the Commission therefore needed to be revised to reflect the new situation.

14. In 2017 and 2018, the Public Prosecution Service had received 18 complaints in relation to crimes against the life of members of indigenous and Afro-Honduran communities; criminal proceedings had been brought in six of those cases, resulting in six convictions. Forty-five complaints had been received in relation to threats against members of those communities, resulting in two prosecutions and convictions. The Office of the Special Prosecutor for Ethnic Groups and Cultural Heritage had requested the prosecution of cases involving members of indigenous and Afro-Honduran communities, including killings in the municipality of Ahuás and Santo Tomás and threats against members of the Lenca community in La Iguala and La Paz. Nine individuals, including the executive president of a hydroelectric company, had been charged with the murder of indigenous environmental activist Berta Cáceres. In fact, the court's verdict in the case was expected later that day. Although other indigenous human rights defenders had been murdered, Berta Cáceres was the only one who had been subject to protective measures, specifically an interim measure ordered by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. At the time of her murder, the national human rights protection mechanism had not yet been established.

15. The courts and the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Ethnic Groups and Cultural Heritage did invoke the Convention; details of specific cases would be provided in writing. In terms of human resources, the Office of the Special Prosecutor had a chief, a deputy chief, four assistant prosecutors, a secretary, a person to receive complaints, two investigation agents from the Police Investigation Directorate and an assistant investigator. The Office had a budget of almost 8 million lempiras. In 2017 and 2018, 18 complaints of racial discrimination had been received; 5 cases had been prosecuted, 1 had been dismissed and the remainder were under investigation. In some cases, the parties had agreed to a conciliation process; in one such case a university lecturer had been ordered by the judge to make a televised apology and in another a legal professional had had to participate in campaigns to combat racial discrimination.

16. Under the Act on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Officials, as at the end of September 2018, a total of 370 collective and individual requests for protection had been processed, 127 of them from human rights defenders. Work was under way on an analysis of the risk context and a prevention plan, in cooperation with human rights defenders from the Lenca community in the department of La Paz. Regarding the judgment of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the *Garífuna Punta Piedra Community* case, the Government had already implemented six of the reparation measures ordered, including cessation of exploration activities, publication of the judgment, reimbursement to the Victims' Legal Assistance Fund and the establishment of inter-agency coordination mechanisms. Ten more measures were in the process of being implemented, including the establishment of a community

development fund and the development of clear property registration mechanisms. A number of measures had also been taken with respect to the Court's judgment in the *Garifuna Triunfo de la Cruz Community* case. Nonetheless, in 2018, a representative of the community of Punta Piedra had stated in court that the beneficiaries did not wish a risk analysis to be carried out until the judgment had been fully satisfied. It was very important that persons benefiting from protection mechanisms accepted the protective measures freely and voluntarily. Replies to outstanding questions would be provided in writing.

17. **Mr. Salinas** (Honduras) said that the minimum wage was established through a participatory tripartite dialogue; it ranged from US\$ 400 to US\$ 450 per month depending on a number of factors, such as the sector of economic activity and the size of the company. The special measures taken to improve living conditions in the Mosquitia region had been implemented through a participatory process since April 2016 and, up to June 2018, approximately US\$ 16 million had been allocated to support them. The Government, international cooperation partners, the local authorities, civil society organizations representing the indigenous and Afro-Honduran communities and other actors had agreed to establish an alliance for the development of the Mosquitia region. One of the first steps had been to award the titles to 1.2 million hectares of land to 12 territorial councils in the region, representing the Afro-Honduran, Miskito, Pech and Tawahka communities. The titles had been drawn up in the indigenous languages of each community. The alliance's objectives were focused on socioeconomic development, enhancing social and productive infrastructure, reducing vulnerability and strengthening territorial governance.

18. A series of measures had been adopted in respect of workers in the deep-sea diving industry, including the construction of a comprehensive support centre and 98 housing units for divers and their families and the awarding of school and university scholarships to divers' children. Scholarships had also been given to 200 Miskito students to study at the National Agricultural University in Olancho. Other special measures included drafting a specific "plan for life" for the Tawahka people, outlining their vision for sustainable development. Work was under way with the Miskito and Tawahka communities on developing value chains for yucca and cocoa producers, among others. It was hoped that the National Agricultural University in the community of Mistrú would open in 2019. Given that one of the main constraints faced by people in the region, particularly in Puerto Lempira, was the lack of electricity, the Government had made a concerted effort to acquire two electrical generators, one through international cooperation and the other using government funds, to ensure the availability of at least 14 to 16 hours of electricity a day. The Afro-Honduran area of the Mosquitia region would also be provided with an alternative source of electricity.

19. On the question of statistics, a territorial baseline study would be conducted in the next six months in the Mosquitia region. The survey would be carried out by young people from the region in the local indigenous languages. The aim would be to ensure that the data collected did not leave anyone behind, in accordance with objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

20. **Ms. Salas Monte** (Honduras) said that the Directorate for Children, Adolescents and Families worked in coordination with the Inter-Agency Commission for the Prevention of Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Adolescents to address the lack of empirical data to support the effective implementation of public policy aimed at particularly vulnerable groups of the population. In accordance with the international instruments to which Honduras was a party, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and with the support of international partners and civil society organizations, the first national study had been carried out in 2017 among 916 respondents to evaluate the extent and impact of trafficking in the country. The survey had been carefully worded to minimize the risk of revictimization of respondents, and the persons administering the survey had received appropriate training. The objective had been to identify recruitment patterns, vulnerabilities, regional specificities and different types of exploitation. Based on the survey results, there did not seem to be any significant pattern of victimization based on ethnicity. Victims identified in the survey had not lodged complaints for a variety of reasons, including fear or

a lack of knowledge of the crime of trafficking. With regard to trafficking in indigenous and Afro-Honduran communities, the survey had revealed that Miskito children were more vulnerable to forced labour, including work on fishing boats and the sale of drugs. Another step aimed at improving data collection was the creation of an observatory for the rights of children and adolescents, which would highlight progress made in the realization of those rights across the country.

21. A national committee had just been set up to support efforts to design a public policy on children and adolescents with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and implementing the recommendations of various international bodies. In 2017, the Directorate for Children, Adolescents and Families had opened a regional office in Puerto Lempira. An agreement had been concluded with all of the mayors in the area to establish a comprehensive system for the protection and realization of children's and adolescents' rights. Work would also continue on the reform of the Code on Children and Adolescents.

22. **Mr. Velásquez** (Honduras) said that it was true that, in 2011, Honduras had had one of the highest homicide rates in the world. However, as a result of the efforts of the current Government and inter-agency cooperation, the number of homicides per 100,000 inhabitants had now decreased to 42.7. In 2018, the Congress had passed a new law on the control of firearms, ammunition, explosives and related material, which would regulate activities related to the import, export, transit, transport, transfer, sale, manufacture, storage and repair of firearms. One of the most relevant new provisions was that natural or legal persons could now own only a maximum of three firearms. The law contained detailed provisions on the specific types and calibres of weapons permitted for personal use; automatic firearms were prohibited. Persons who had received permission to own up to five firearms under the previous law of 2000 could keep those weapons but would not be allowed to replace them. The Government aimed to eliminate unregistered firearms and was taking a series of measures to prevent the inappropriate and irresponsible use of such weapons and reduce armed violence and its social and economic consequences. In order to obtain a licence, an individual must be over the age of 21, pass a psychological test, produce a medical certificate and receive induction training.

23. A bill on the use of force by law enforcement officers had been submitted to the National Congress in August 2018. Significant efforts had been made in recent years to improve security in Honduras. New legislation regulating the police force had been introduced earlier that year. A bill on the monitoring, evaluation and training of private security agents had been submitted to the National Congress in February 2018; the aim of the bill was to define the field of activity of such agents and the means that they were permitted to use.

24. There were plans to amend the Criminal Code in the light of articles 2 and 4 of the Convention in order to define a number of criminal offences relating to discrimination, such as the denial of access to public services, incitement to discrimination, labour discrimination and genocide, and to protect indigenous persons and persons of African descent from discrimination in the field of employment.

25. Furthermore, legislation had been passed to protect persons involved in underwater fishing, and a bill designed to ensure equal participation in political and public life for all sectors of the population was under discussion. The numerous measures that had been taken reflected the extremely high level of commitment among all relevant bodies, including the National Congress, the Ministry of Human Rights, Justice, the Interior and Decentralization and non-governmental organizations, to the prevention of discrimination and the protection of human rights.

26. **Ms. Madrid** (Honduras), drawing attention to the efforts of the Supreme Electoral Court to further the political participation of indigenous persons and persons of African descent, said that five full members and three alternate members of the National Congress were women of indigenous origin or African descent. Never before had that sector of the population been so well represented in the legislature. The National Institute for Women had been working to build the technical capacities of the municipal women's offices. A school for the empowerment of women in rural areas had been set up to provide training in leadership and decision-making, as well as cultural and environmental issues. Measures had

been taken to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies, including the establishment of 25 centres for adolescents in indigenous and Afro-Honduran communities to combat problems such as poverty, malnutrition, school dropout and exclusion.

27. According to data on femicide rates in departments with an indigenous and Afro-Honduran population, there had been 15 femicides in Colón, 25 in Copán, 7 in Intibucá, 5 in La Paz and 8 in Lempira in 2016. The femicide rate in Intibucá had fallen in 2017; the Government was studying the situation in that department in order to determine the reasons for that decrease. Several radio and television campaigns countering violence against women had been conducted in recent years. Persons requiring emergency assistance of any kind could call the 911 hotline. In 2018, there had been a notable increase in reports of domestic violence in several departments with an indigenous and Afro-Honduran population. Since domestic violence remained the primary cause for complaints made to the police, the Government had prioritized the issue in its short-term and medium-term action plans. Several prevention programmes had been implemented, including a project to reduce sexual violence by providing better street lighting.

28. Women's City Centres had been set up to provide a range of services for women aged 15 years and over, without discrimination, taking into account the culture and needs of indigenous women. The services provided fell into six main categories, including sexual and reproductive health, violence against women and economic independence. Around 11,800 families had benefited from a project that was being implemented in rural areas to promote sustainable development and reduce poverty, while some 15,000 households had benefited from the Dry Corridor plan, under which training was provided on production, health and nutrition. In June 2018, a team of officials had been dispatched to border areas to promote civil registration; as a result of that initiative, around 1,700 adults and 2,500 children had been registered.

29. **Mr. Murillo Martínez** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would welcome disaggregated data on the amount of land that had been awarded to each ethnic group, as a percentage of the 2.5 million hectares that had been awarded in total. He wondered whether the measures that had been taken to implement the ruling of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the *Garifuna Punta Piedra Community* case could be extended to cover other ethnic groups that were in comparable situations.

30. He wished to know how many procedures for the prior consultation of specific communities had been conducted, which thematic areas those procedures had covered and what measures were being taken to ensure compliance with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), which stipulated that consultations must be conducted in good faith, on the basis of appropriate procedures and with the involvement of representative organizations. He would welcome more information on the governance of so-called model cities and the measures taken to protect the territorial rights of ethnic groups in those cities.

31. He would appreciate more information on the awareness-raising that had been carried out in connection with the bill on prior consultation. He would also like to know whether the concerns raised about that bill by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples had been taken into account. In the context of the support provided to communities in the Mosquitia region, he wondered what specific measures had been taken to realize the labour rights of divers in that region.

32. He wished to commend the State party on the progress that had been made in combating violence and the new indicators that had been developed in that area. It would be interesting to know whether the measures that had been taken to eradicate violence in Garifuna communities would be implemented elsewhere. Lastly, he would welcome more information on the scope of the bill that established quotas for the participation of ethnic groups.

33. **Mr. Avtonomov** said that he wished to encourage the executive and legislative branches of the Government to discuss the possibility of ratifying the amendment to article 8 of the Convention, which was intended to regularize the procedure for the funding of the Committee. Noting that there were nine recognized indigenous peoples in Honduras, he asked whether the Government had adopted a procedure to ensure that recognition was

granted to all indigenous peoples who identified themselves as such. Lastly, he enquired whether the specific needs and characteristics of rural and urban Afro-Honduran communities were taken into account in public policies.

34. **Ms. Shepherd** said that the delegation's responses had given her a better understanding of the challenges faced by Afro-Hondurans and the efforts being made to address those challenges. She remained convinced, however, that the International Decade for People of African Descent was a valuable opportunity to adopt specific measures to support Afro-Hondurans. The delegation had not yet clarified whether the State party had adopted an action plan for the Decade with a view to tackling the challenges faced by that particularly vulnerable group.

35. **Mr. Calí Tzay** said that, while he welcomed the decision to appoint representatives of the nine indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples to an advisory committee within the National Congress, it appeared that the main reason for doing so was to reduce the likelihood of those peoples' rejecting future projects in their communities. If that was indeed the case, there was reason to argue that those representatives were being exploited. He would be grateful if the delegation could clarify the purpose of those appointments.

36. He had likewise been struck by the fact that members of the delegation used interchangeably terms such as ethnic groups and ethnic communities to refer to the country's indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples. He wished to recall that only the rights of indigenous peoples were recognized and guaranteed under international human rights law.

37. There was a general tendency in Latin America to subvert the concept of interculturality to promote the assimilation of indigenous peoples and persons of African descent with a view to achieving cultural uniformity. It would therefore be useful to hear more about how the State party understood and defined the concept of interculturality and how it went about promoting it in Honduran society. He asked whether indigenous medicine was practised and respected in the national health-care system. It would also be helpful to receive more information on the demographic composition of the non-indigenous population and on how those persons identified themselves.

The meeting was suspended at 12.10 p.m. and resumed at 12.25 p.m.

38. **Mr. Velásquez** (Honduras) said that a bill recently submitted to the National Congress would serve to repeal the Elections and Political Organizations Act and ensure a more equitable distribution of elective posts by introducing a minimum quota for the representation of young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples and women. Those minimum quotas would also apply in respect of senior positions in political parties, the National Congress and local government.

39. The Act on Fishing and Aquaculture set out a range of social security measures for dive fishers and the wider community. Article 31 of the Act authorized the establishment of mutual funds or trusts with public or private resources to help meet the needs of persons affected by the risks of diving and their families. Such funds or trusts would guarantee fishers who had retired, fallen ill or become incapacitated prior to the entry into force of the Act access to basic medical care and other necessary social benefits or allowances. The State was required to finance those mutual funds or trusts with revenue from the fishing tax collected in the region. Following the entry into force of the Act, all social security coverage for fishers would be provided by the social security system. The State was likewise obliged to provide retraining courses and to put in place specialized training and comprehensive care programmes to promote the welfare of communities and families as more people retrained and left the dive fishing profession. Those courses and programmes were also to be funded with revenue from the fishing tax collected in the region. The State also had an obligation to oversee the implementation of projects related to fishing activities that provided dive fishers with disabilities with decent employment according to their capacities and state of health.

40. Article 123 of the Act on Fishing and Aquaculture required the Ministry of Labour and Social Security to establish the necessary regulatory provisions in respect of fishing activities, especially dive fishing, to regulate occupational health and safety, compliance

with which was to be verified by the labour inspectorate. The Honduran Social Security Institute was obliged to devise the policies and take the steps necessary to incorporate dive fishers into the social security system.

41. **Mr. Nájera** (Honduras) said that he had recommended to the President of the National Congress that the advisory committee in question should include representatives of the country's nine indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples. Multiple consultations had been held with those peoples to ensure that the framework bill on free, prior and informed consultation and consent reflected their aspirations. The indigenous and Afro-Honduran representatives sitting on the advisory committee would be free to convey the will of their peoples without interference. The situation in a number of departments and municipalities had improved significantly. In the Municipality of Santa Fe, the crime and homicide rates had been reduced to zero, while in the Department of Colón, the rate of weapons use was likewise negligible. It was hoped that other departments and municipalities would follow that trend. The final version of the framework bill on free, prior and informed consultation with and consent by indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples, along with its implementing regulations, as approved by those peoples, would be submitted for adoption by the National Congress in the near future. Although Honduras did not have economic development zones like those found in highly developed countries, it did have industrial estates.

42. **Mr. Salinas** (Honduras) said that a protocol for the prevention of decompression sickness and the care of persons suffering from its effects was in place. In order to promote the recovery of Miskito dive fishers suffering from the effects of that sickness, a comprehensive care centre equipped with a hyperbaric chamber had been opened in Puerto Lempira Hospital. In addition, around 100 housing units had been built to accommodate those dive fishers and education scholarships had been provided to their children. A concerted effort had likewise been made to encourage the spouses or partners of dive fishers affected by the illness to participate in alternative income-generating activities as a means of replacing the income that they would have received through dive fishing. Dive fishers also had the opportunity to raise their concerns and propose additional measures aimed at improving their situation through the Honduran Mosquitia Territorial Governance Platform. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security had opened an office in Puerto Lempira and in another municipality where dive fishers were often recruited for the purpose of safeguarding their labour rights.

43. **Mr. Murillo Martínez** thanked the delegation for the enlightening dialogue and said that the Committee had gained a better understanding of the progress made in improving the situation of indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples and of the obstacles that still needed to be overcome in that connection. Perhaps the most significant achievement to date was the adjudication of large swathes of land to the country's indigenous peoples. The Committee would like to receive, within 48 hours, additional information on when that land had been adjudicated and to whom; the framework bill on free, prior and informed consultation with and consent by indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples; and how the representation of those peoples in the National Congress was guaranteed. He would also be grateful if the delegation could provide additional information on the number of dive fishers affected by decompression sickness and who had been treated in the hyperbaric chamber installed in Puerto Lempira Hospital.

44. It would also be useful to learn more about the action plan adopted in relation to the International Decade for People of African Descent, particular in the light of the leading role played by Honduras in the International Year for People of African Descent back in 2011. He reminded the delegation that, at the Committee's initiative, the United Nations was considering adopting an international declaration on the rights of people of African descent. The time was therefore ripe for the State party to return to the forefront of efforts to promote the Decade. Lastly, he encouraged the State party to pay due attention to the recommendations contained in the Committee's concluding observations.

45. **Mr. González** (Honduras) thanked the Committee for the fruitful dialogue and said that the delegation would endeavour to transmit additional information on the action plan adopted in relation to the International Decade for People of African Descent within 48 hours and would welcome any feedback that the Committee wished to provide. A range of activities had been conducted in relation to the Decade, including a day-long event

involving all the members of Congress who were of African descent. Additional events would take place in universities and in remote areas of the country. Regrettably, the long-standing issue of funding for future actions to improve the living conditions of persons of African descent still remained unresolved.

46. Tragically, between three and five Miskito dive fishers between 20 and 25 years of age developed a disability each year. He had been given to understand that the persons responsible for organizing workers on fishing vessels often sent some 60 workers out to sea instead of the prescribed number of 25. Therefore, in December 2018, an inspection would be performed on open-water vessels. The Government was making every effort to combat the trafficking of Miskitos and the injustices affecting them.

47. The report submitted to the Committee already provided ample information on the education system. The delegation would endeavour to submit additional information on the bilingual intercultural education available in the country to complement that already supplied in the report. The Government recognized that the collection and production of disaggregated statistical data on each of the country's indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples continued to pose a challenge and would pursue its efforts to enhance its capacity in that area. It would likewise work to strengthen relations with civil society and to further improve the living conditions of the country's nine indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.