



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

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Sixty-eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1742nd MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 28 February 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. de GOUTTES

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION
SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE
CONVENTION (agenda item 6) (*continued*)

Ninth to thirteenth periodic reports of El Salvador (CERD/C/471/Add.1); list of questions for the State party (document without reference distributed in the meeting in Spanish only)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairman, the members of the delegation of El Salvador again took places at the Committee table.*

2. Mr. MELÉNDEZ (El Salvador) said that the indigenous population in El Salvador enjoyed full recognition, but indirectly so, because, since the time of colonization, its numbers had not ceased to decline, because it was dispersed throughout the entire territory and had integrated uniformly with the rest of the population. The entire population had also fully assimilated the traditions and customs of the indigenous inhabitants.

3. By comparison with the rest of Central America, it had to be said that the country had virtually no blacks. That was partially due to the fact that during the slave era, El Salvador did not grow bananas, for whose cultivation other countries provided slaves from the African continent: El Salvador grew crops such as coffee, cotton, and sugar cane, on whose plantations peasant labour was used. But black immigrants had begun entering the country in recent years. Those immigrants, who worked primarily in the service industry and the ports, generally favoured keeping their original nationality.

4. The Peasant Uprising of 1932 and the internal conflict that took place in the country in the 1980s were not aimed at indigenous inhabitants. Historians felt that the 1932 uprising was due to impoverishment and the worsening of the economic situation of the rural population as a result of the crash of 1929 in the United States, which caused prices to drop for coffee, which was El Salvador's principal export commodity at the time. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that the then-Government took an ideology-driven, politicized position with regard to the peasant movement. As for the events of 1980, they did not expressly involve the indigenous population, but were the result of a political and ideological crisis that gripped the entire country. Although major acts of violence were committed, the commission created under the aegis of the UN had managed to establish the facts. It was not an isolated segment of the populace that suffered from those acts — all of Salvadoran society was affected, which found expression in a 10-year developmental lag, which had to be eliminated after the signing of the Peace Accords in 1992.

5. Certain international instruments, including ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, had not been ratified by El Salvador, because some of the principles included in them were incompatible with the Constitution, which needed to be amended in order for the instruments to be ratified. The question of the ratification of those documents was being studied by a National Assembly legislative commission.

6. As for the education provided for migrants, and for children in particular, he said that El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala had signed a memorandum of understanding to provide for temporary protection of migrants from those countries

who were illegally in the country of destination and wished to remain there and to legalize their status within one year. To implement those memoranda of understanding in El Salvador, the texts of regulations for applying them were being prepared.

7. Mr. MEJÍA TRABANINO (El Salvador) said that the classification of apartheid as a crime was being written into the framework of the reform of section 19 of the Criminal Code, which was devoted to crimes against humanity. The inter-institutional committee assigned to make that reform was re-working the draft reform at present on the basis of recommendations and suggestions of the International Committee of the Red Cross with an eye to bringing it into conformance with the four Geneva conventions and their protocols, as well as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

8. Mr. MELÉNDEZ (El Salvador) said that there were no separate statistical data on the situation of the indigenous population in El Salvador. However, thanks to a brief description of the indigenous population prepared in 2001, the indigenous population was known to account for 10-12 per cent of the total population. A State policy designed specifically for that segment of the population was virtually non-existent. Policy in health care, education, housing, and the environment was of a general nature and was served the entire population, without any restrictions. As for political rights, indigenous inhabitants had the same opportunities as the rest of the population to participate in political life and in the decision-making process.

9. He maintained that the comments of one of the Committee members to the effect that El Salvador did not attach great significance to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination were untrue. Like any other State, it observed its international obligations. In fact, after the signing of the peace accords, the progress achieved by the country in democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the struggle against racism and racial discrimination proved that it attached a great deal of significance to the observance of international norms.

10. In answering a question pertaining to indigenous peoples' access to their sacred sites, he reported that, under the special Protection of Cultural Assets Act, the obligation to preserve and protect historical and cultural sites of any kind and to disseminate information on them rests with the National Council for Culture and the Arts (CONCULTURA). The Council had given affirmative responses to all the requests for access to sacred sites from indigenous people who wanted to perform their religious rites at those sites.

11. Mr. MEJÍA TRABANINO (El Salvador) cited as an example the Supreme Court decisions that defined jurisprudence as pertaining to principles of equality, non-discrimination, and equal treatment by the law and the 19 January 1999 ruling in which the Court found that "in the legal system of El Salvador, a bearer of Constitutional rights can raise a question regarding the observance of the guarantee of the fundamental content of those rights not only to legislative bodies, but also to all heads of law-enforcement agencies, since, under articles 86, 172, 185, and 235 of the Constitution, they are governed not only by the law, but also by the Constitution. Thus, it is established that the subordination of all heads of law-enforcement agencies to the norms of the law denotes their subordination to the Constitution and not merely their subordination to the law". Moreover, article 292 of the Criminal Code specified that "any State official or staff member who denies any person a

given personal right recognized under the Constitution of the Republic on the grounds of nationality, race, sex, religion, or any other basis shall be subject to imprisonment for a period of three years and to suspension of his or her official duties or functions”.

12. As to the legal remedies available to victims of discrimination, he added that, under Salvadoran law, any person in the territory of El Salvador had the right to use one of the legal remedies called for under the law to guarantee the exercise of his or her fundamental rights. Furthermore, that person could initiate an *amparo* action specified under the law to inform the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court of an alleged violation of his or her fundamental rights by any State official, body, or organization in order to restore his or her exercise of those rights.

13. Mr. CALI TZAY noted that, according to information provided to the Committee at the preceding meeting, El Salvador had a certain number of indigenous people who spoke only their own language. In the course of certain administrative procedures, those individuals could have a need for an interpreter. In that connection, he was interested in knowing whether the right to the use of one’s native language was protected by the Constitution. He also wanted to know whether the Constitution enshrined principles pertaining to freedom of worship and where religious rites were practiced. Furthermore, he was interested in learning whether it was necessary to have a permit to worship in Catholic churches of the colonial era, which were often valuable architectural treasures.

14. Mr. MELÉNDEZ (El Salvador) said freedom of worship was guaranteed by the Constitution. There were no restrictions whatsoever on religious ceremonies that required no special permit. The official language of El Salvador was Spanish, and, as far as he knew, there was no mention of indigenous languages in the Constitution, which did not prevent the adoption of special measures to encourage the use of the Nahuatl language. The Peace Accords of 1992 signaled a turn toward greater freedom, particularly in terms of cultural self-expression, but no policy that would provide specific assistance in the realm of language was being pursued.

15. Ms. JAIME DE ARAUJO (El Salvador) noted that all the indigenous languages that had once existed in El Salvador had disappeared, the only exception being Nahuatl, which was still spoken by no more than 250 families, which used Spanish as a means of communication.

16. Ms. DAH was interested in additional information on provisions of the law that, despite the difficulty of the work, enabled revision of the Constitution for the purpose of incorporating in it certain provisions that could be regarded as important.

17. Mr. AMIR asked why the population of the country’s indigenous people had grown smaller — was it because they had left the country as a result of demographic and cultural decline, or was it for the seemingly plausible reason that they had finally integrated with the rest of the population? He was interested in knowing whether that meant that there were no longer any minorities in El Salvador.

18. Mr. ABOUL-NASR wanted the Salvadoran delegation to address land questions in more detail, because a connection with the land was a particular feature of the identity of an indigenous population. He was interested in knowing whether the State party recognized the indigenous population as such and whether it recognized all of the indigenous population’s rights, particularly rights associated with the use of language. He also wanted to know whether the State paid for the

services of an interpreter for a person who did not speak Spanish. And he wanted more information on the sense of the word “apartheid” as it was used in Salvadoran law.

19. Mr. PILLAI expressed surprise at some of the explanations given by the delegation on the subject of the languages and culture of indigenous inhabitants: they seemed to be contradicting the information contained in the report of the State party. For example, paragraph 151 of the report indicated that, according to article 62 of the Constitution, autochthonous languages used in the national territory constituted the bulk of the cultural asset and were to be preserved, disseminated, and respected; paragraph 152 said that the National Council for Culture and the Arts (CONCULTURA) was doing work to recognize and support indigenous Salvadoran peoples and organizations in terms of disseminating and promoting their culture.

20. Mr. EWOMSAN asked whether the disappearance of the autochthonous languages was associated simply with the way things evolved or whether it was the result of a conscious assimilationist policy.

21. Mr. MELÉNDEZ (El Salvador) explained that questions of land ownership in El Salvador were governed by law, that there was a land registry, and that peasants, like indigenous peoples and all other citizens, had the right to acquire land and to hold title to it in the manner prescribed by law. In the 1980s, the farmland of large landowners was confiscated and redistributed among agricultural producers organized into cooperatives, to include indigenous inhabitants. However, that agrarian reform did not produce the expected results: the new large agricultural enterprises fell into disrepair and re-sold their land to the original owners. Thus, the ownership was again concentrated in the hands of a small number of owners. Despite that, the Government at present was making efforts to see to it that individuals who were victims of natural disasters, particularly earthquakes and hurricanes, had a small plot of land for subsistence farming.

22. In addition, the Salvadoran representatives pointed out that the rules for revising the Constitution were in the Constitution itself, and article 148 said that the adoption of any amendment must be by a majority of one vote reckoned on the basis of the total number of deputies of the Legislative Assembly. In practice, it was a lengthy, complicated process that lasted, on average, two legislative sessions. The most recent changes made to the high canons pertained to priority areas of national policy (the organization of the army and of political parties) and were adopted in the context of a peaceful process following the conclusion of the 1992 Peace Accords. Today, although those topics were under study, the constitutional changes that would be required for the ratification of various international treaties were not finding a consensus.

23. As for the ethnic makeup of the population, the delegation again affirmed that, unlike countries of Central America with an Atlantic seaboard, El Salvador maintained no data on the black population. Even its national football team did not have a single player of African descent.

24. Ms. DAH (Rapporteur on El Salvador) noted that the Committee members were persisting in the matter of the presence or absence of a black community within the borders of the State party because they could not be satisfied by absurd explanations. She was interested in learning the assessment criteria used for classifying an individual as indigenous.

25. Mr. LINDGREN ALVES suggested that the delegation pay closer heed to the numerous discrepancies and contradictions in its country's report, particularly in connection with the question of the protection of the indigenous population and its languages. It was hard for him to imagine that the ethnic, demographic, and language realities could be so different for two neighboring countries like El Salvador and Guatemala, whose report had been considered the previous day. For its part, Guatemala was already acknowledging that, without the recognition and active participation of its indigenous inhabitants, it was impossible to imagine planning development.

26. Mr. MELÉNDEZ (El Salvador) said that El Salvador was a country of mestizos, and there was no pronounced difference between whites and Indians, except in tiny isolated groups, where certain traditions, customs, and forms of crafts that had existed in the past had survived. Nonetheless, it had to be pointed out that the size of the indigenous population had been decreasing since the colonial era and that today the indigenous communities, whose numbers constituted around 10 per cent of the population of El Salvador, as opposed to roughly 60 per cent in Guatemala, were scattered throughout the country and were intermixing with society: they had lost most of their specific features, such as language and traditions.

27. Ms. JAIME DE ARAUJO (El Salvador) added that all the indigenous communities that, in the pre-colonial period, had populated the territory of what is now El Salvador had disappeared as a result of natural causes, and the only ethnic groups who had survived the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors were the Lenca, the Nahua-Pipil, and the Cacaotera. Today, as a result of intensive cultural assimilation, the population of El Salvador was extremely mixed, and distinguishing one ethnic group from another was difficult. There was not a single Salvadoran who could boast that no blood of the native inhabitants of the land flowed through his veins.

28. Mr. MELÉNDEZ (El Salvador) said that the disappearance of indigenous languages was in no way related to a deliberate policy: it was the consequence of de facto integration and the result of the phenomenon of natural acculturation. Today, all languages, except Spanish, were in the process of dying out, with the exception of Nahuatl, although it was being used solely within a small group of individuals who spoke it to maintain relations within the group. Guided by article 62 of the Constitution, which said that autochthonous languages being used within the country's borders were part of the country's cultural heritage and should be preserved, disseminated, and respected, the Government had prepared various programmes, including a programme to preserve the Nahuatl language, that were geared to breathing new life into that language, expanding the capabilities for teaching it, developing adapted instructional materials, and elevating the prestige of the autochthonous culture. For example, classes were being conducted in Nahuatl in 16 primary schools, primarily in the department of Sonsonate, from the first through sixth grades, as a result of which some 1,300 children were able to receive an education in that language in 1990-1992. Furthermore, a great deal of attention was now being focused in school programmes on multiculturalism and respect for linguistic and cultural identity and for linguistic and cultural heritage.

29. As for the situation with the schooling of the children of migrants in El Salvador, the delegation assured the Committee that the schools of the eastern

portion of the country were admitting students from Honduras and Nicaragua on the same terms as Salvadoran children, and, to date, not a single case of discrimination had been recorded. He pointed out that the Constitution recognized the equality of all persons before the law and the right of every person to exercise his or her civil rights with no disparities whatsoever on the grounds of nationality, race, sex, or religion. Furthermore, under article 58, no educational institution was entitled to refuse to admit students on the basis of the specific nature of the ties that bound their parents or for reasons associated with social, religious, racial, or political differences. The law provided punishment for that, which included suspension of the guilty educator without pay, and teachers, students, and parents, who, in rural areas, often performed the function of school administration, were well aware of such punishments.

30. In addressing the human rights achievements of El Salvador, he pointed to the creation of the Office of the Procurator for the Protection of Human Rights, which, under the Peace Accords of 1992, together with the Main Legal Administration of the Republic and the Attorney General of the Republic, formed the State procurator system. That standing, independent body, which was a separate legal entity and enjoyed administrative independence, was charged with the promotion and defence of human rights and with human rights education, as well as with the training of public servants and representatives of civil society. The initial training of teachers and their continuing education provided them with, inter alia, a commitment to human rights in general and to the rights of the child in particular, as well as to a culture of peaceful coexistence.

31. Responding to questions regarding affirmative action measures being taken by the Salvadoran Government in the interests of women and girls and regarding initiatives to eradicate illiteracy, he said that the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women (ISDEMU), which was created in 1996, was empowered to effect and evaluate national policy for women and to ensure its implementation, thereby promoting improvement of the status of Salvadoran women. In particular, the institute was developing a strategy to combat discrimination against women and girls. In addition, the Ministry of Education had organized an education advocacy campaign to combat discrimination against girls in the school system, especially indigenous girls. Efforts were under way to give pregnant teenagers the opportunity to continue in school and to eradicate the dismissive attitudes toward women in schools. Finally, with regard to the campaign to eliminate illiteracy, he stressed that among the people covered by such State programmes, 52 per cent were women, and most of them were representatives of the indigenous population of the departments of Sonsonate and San Salvador.

32. As for marginalized and vulnerable groups, he said that a national council for the disabled had been created to implement the national policy pertaining to that category of persons. In that agency, the disabled themselves could express their opinions on equal footing with representatives of government bodies and of the private sector who were members of the council. By and large, associations for the disabled took part in the discussion and development of all new programmes and laws that affected them.

33. The Salvadoran representative said that guarantees of the rights of the disabled were provided for by an entire array of documents, including a law on equal opportunities and a document on the national policy pertaining to the disabled and

the action plan for its implementation, as well as in a directive for bringing the disabled into the labour market. A mixed school that would be equipped to accommodate disabled students, as well as other schoolchildren, and that would serve as a model for opening other such schools was to be created in 2006 pursuant to a presidential plan for the support of the disabled. Furthermore, 50 interdisciplinary commissions had been created to attend to the needs of the disabled, particularly the deaf. Sign language courses attended by some 500 people had been organized in 2003-2006.

34. With regard to persons living with HIV/AIDS, he said that a law had been passed in 2001 on the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS to prevent the spread of that virus, to establish the obligations of HIV carriers, and to guarantee the social and economic rights of those individuals. Various information-awareness programmes had been started to better inform the public of the routes of transmission of HIV and ways to protect against the virus. In 2000, a comprehensive plan to combat HIV/AIDS had gotten under way, and various regulations pertaining to persons living with HIV/AIDS had been drafted. Several of the country's hospitals had begun making antiretroviral treatment available in 2001, and multidisciplinary teams had begun providing care for serum-positive individuals. A programme for the decentralization of antiretroviral treatment had gotten under way in 2002, and 16 hospitals in various regions of the country offered integrated care of persons living with HIV/AIDS in 2006.

35. As for children, he said that the Salvadoran Institute for the Integral Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA) was not doing research pertaining specifically to discrimination against children. The institute dealt with children who were victims of cruelty and exploitation, young drug abusers, and juvenile delinquents. According to his statistical data, 4,911 children were victims of rights violations in 2005, and 13.1 per cent of them were homeless, 6.5 per cent, abandoned, and 4.7 per cent, victims of sexual abuse. A considerable number of those children had been subjected to social discrimination.

36. Mr. CALI TZAY asked the Salvadoran delegation to explain what the criteria were for recognizing a given individual as a representative of an indigenous people and who had established those criteria. In addition, he was interested in knowing which provisions of the Constitution were preventing El Salvador from acceding to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169.

37. Mr. AVTONOMOV asked the Salvadoran delegation to explain whether the traditional forms of community organization and the customary law of indigenous peoples were recognized and, specifically, to inform the Committee whether disputes between representatives of indigenous peoples could be settled with procedures based on custom. Finally, he was interested in knowing whether, along with cooperatives, traditional forms of use of autochthonous land were being preserved.

38. Mr. PILLAI said that civil society organizations and groups that protect the interests of indigenous communities had reported their concern to the Committee over the fact that the Government of El Salvador had signed the free trade agreement between the United States and countries of South America and the Dominican Republic, which could result in greater exploitation of natural resources and, consequently, could have a marked, adverse effect on the situation of the indigenous peoples living within the borders of the State party. He asked the

Salvadoran delegation whether the Government of El Salvador had taken into consideration the potential effect of that agreement on the indigenous peoples.

39. Mr. KJAERUM asked the delegation of El Salvador whether non-governmental organizations had taken part in preparing the report of the State party. In addition, he was interested in receiving information of greater specificity on the work of the Human Rights Commissioner, to include whether the Commissioner had done research to clarify the situation of migrant workers.

40. Recalling the 1983 massacre by the Salvadoran military of 16 civilians who belonged to one of the associations for protecting the interests of indigenous peoples, he expressed a desire to learn whether the State party had followed the recommendations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to initiate investigations of that incident.

41. Mr. AMIR, stressing the importance of the Maya civilization to Western civilization and Western culture and to the entire modern world in general, asked the Salvadoran delegation whether the Ministry of Culture had the funds to support the research work that was under way with regard to that civilization and to preserve the culture of the indigenous peoples of El Salvador, whose ancestors were themselves the Maya.

42. Ms. JAIME DE ARAUJO (El Salvador), responding to Mr. Amir, clarified that the Maya people had left the country's territory long before the arrival of the settlers, probably as a result of a volcanic eruption, and that there was only one trace left of that civilization — the location of the archaeological excavations in Joya de Cerén. At present, the indigenous peoples living in the country were the Nahua-Pipil, the Lenca, and the Cacaotera.

43. As for the criteria for determining whether an individual were an indigenous person, she explained that, for historical reasons, determining the ethnic affiliation of individuals in El Salvador was much more difficult than in Guatemala, where indigenous peoples had preserved, among other things, their culture and their language and demanded recognition of their affiliation with their community. According to a document prepared on the basis of the results of a survey conducted over a period of three years or so by the World Bank in cooperation with indigenous associations, the individuals surveyed listed the following criteria: their family origin, their Indian roots, the fact that they were keepers of traditions and customs, their physical features, and the knowledge that they were Indians. Thus, in El Salvador, indigenous inhabitants were those who defined themselves as such. At the same time, if outward appearance were the sole criterion, then one could say that all Salvadorans were indigenous people.

44. She added that some 30 indigenous organizations in El Salvador were doing work to gain recognition of the culture and rights of indigenous peoples. Since the Nahuatl language was becoming extinct and only 250 adults spoke it fluently, a programme had been developed to revive the language, and that programme was being implemented in communities that wished to avail themselves of it.

45. In closing, she said that the Alcaldía del Común, bodies for administering indigenous population centers similar to a mayor's office, and the councils of the oldest indigenous communities used customary law.

46. Mr. MELÉNDEZ (El Salvador) said that his country had not ratified the International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples because the legal department of the foreign affairs ministry felt that article 10 of the Convention contravened the principle of legal equality enshrined in the Constitution and that articles 14 and 17 were not compatible with the Constitution's articles 2, 11, and 22, which pertained to property rights. It was difficult to know whether the indigenous peoples had been able to get their special rights taken into account in the signing of the free trade agreement with the United States, because most of the negotiations were held with other countries of Central America at the subregional level. At the same time, Salvadoran authorities had consulted with many civil society associations, including associations of indigenous peoples.

47. The human rights procurator enjoyed total independence in investigating all matters involving the protection and promotion of human rights. Marked progress had been achieved in the field of human rights after the signing of the Peace Accords in 1992. Although the civil war of the 1980s had produced thousands of casualties, and despite the fact that serious violations of human rights had been committed during that period, all groups of the populace and all political movements wanted a policy of national reconciliation and the general amnesty act. With the assistance of the United Nations, a commission had been created to elucidate events that had taken place during the civil war and to establish the causes of the conflict. For all that, Salvadoran authorities preferred to forget the past and did not wish to return to the issues associated with the massacres during the civil conflict.

48. He said that Salvadoran authorities were well aware of the importance of the contribution of the Maya civilization to El Salvador and that everything possible was being done to safeguard and protect the Maya heritage for future generations. At the same time, he noted that in El Salvador, unlike in neighboring countries, very few traces of the Maya culture had survived.

49. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking in a personal capacity, directed the delegation's attention to general recommendation XXXI of the Committee on the prevention of racial discrimination in the administration and functioning of the criminal justice system, which specifically addressed the need to adapt the criminal justice system to the specific nature of the situation of indigenous peoples.

50. Mr. THORNBERRY stressed that the concept of "equality" did not impose the obligation to standardize treatment, but signified the possibility of making preferential treatment available to a given group, while at the same time adopting measures to promote equality between all citizens. In that connection, he expressed regret that the State party, in not ratifying ILO Convention No. 169, had justified its action by saying that it refused to give special treatment to indigenous peoples. He noted that international human rights bodies had never condemned the practice of assimilating indigenous groups and that that practice was of great interest if it were used with the consent of the groups affected by it.

51. Mr. AMIR, noting that many natural disasters had occurred in the territory of the State party, expressed a desire to know what means the authorities had employed to protect, specifically, the indigenous peoples living in particularly vulnerable rural areas.

52. Ms. DAH (Rapporteur on El Salvador) was pleased with the quality of the dialogue between the delegation of El Salvador and the Committee. She noted that the answers given by the delegation had made it possible to clarify a number of discrepancies found in the report under consideration. That said, she thought highly of the State party's clearly enunciated desire to fulfill its commitments under the Convention. Taking into account the fact that El Salvador was a fairly small, developing country that was rebuilding after a long civil war, the Committee was calling upon the State party to consider the possibility of taking account of all groups of the country's population in its Constitution and subsidiary legislation, ratifying ILO Convention No. 169, and strengthening the peace process by acknowledging its responsibility for the massacres and providing compensation for moral injury and material loss to those entitled to it.

53. Mr. MELÉNDEZ (El Salvador) said that the Salvadoran authorities had never pursued any particular policy in the interests of a given group, because they felt that that could entail consequences of a discriminatory nature. At the same time, no general policy had ever come into being against the will of any group of the society. El Salvador, which had recently suffered two earthquakes, as well as hurricanes, had a national system for protecting all victims of natural disasters, regardless of their affiliation or non-affiliation with any group of the indigenous population. In that area, the State party preferred to use not a particularized approach that gave preference to a given group, but a general approach.

54. In conclusion, he said that his country was aware that there was still much to do in combating racial discrimination, but he pointed out that not that much time had passed since El Salvador had come out of what was truly a crisis situation. The publication in 2001 of a document describing the basic characteristics of the indigenous peoples of El Salvador for purposes of correcting the mistakes of the past by recognizing the existence and importance of those peoples had been a big step forward. In bringing his remarks to a close, he said that he would not fail to apprise the competent authorities of El Salvador of the observations and suggestions of the Committee members.

55. The CHAIRPERSON declared that, with that, the consideration of the ninth to thirteenth periodic reports of El Salvador was completed.

56. *The delegation of El Salvador withdrew.*

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.