



## International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

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### Human Rights Committee

#### 102nd session

#### Summary record (partial)\* of the 2803rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 11 July 2011, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Majodina

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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 10.15 a.m.*

**Opening of the session by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

1. **Ms. Pillay** (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) welcomed the new members of the Committee — Mr. Flinterman, Mr. Neuman and Ms. Waterval — to their first session in Geneva. Mr. Flinterman was already familiar with the treaty body system since he had been a long-standing member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. She trusted that they would all greatly contribute through their expertise to the Committee's work. She also congratulated Ms. Majodina on her election to the office of Chairperson of the Committee.
2. Two members of the Committee, Ms. Keller and Mr. El-Haiba, had tendered their resignations since the last session. Ms. Keller would serve as the new Swiss judge at the European Court of Human Rights and Mr. El-Haiba had been appointed Interministerial Human Rights Delegate in Morocco. Elections to replace the two members would be held in New York in early 2012.
3. At its seventeenth session, the Human Rights Council had adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child drafted by the Open-ended Working Group established to elaborate a communications procedure. The Optional Protocol, which would clearly contribute to the protection and advancement of the rights of the child, would be submitted to the General Assembly for approval at its sixty-sixth session.
4. The Human Rights Council had adopted at the same session a resolution expressing grave concern about acts of violence and discrimination against individuals because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. The resolution called on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to commission a global study to document discrimination and violence motivated by sexual orientation and gender identity. The study would serve as the basis for a panel discussion at the nineteenth session of the Council in 2012.
5. The 10 inaugural members of the newly established Committee on Enforced Disappearances had been elected at the first meeting of States parties to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance held on 31 May 2011 at the United Nations in New York. The establishment of the Committee was a significant development in the fight against enforced disappearances and followed the entry into force of the Convention on 23 December 2010 upon ratification by the twentieth State.
6. In 2009 she had called on different stakeholders, including States and civil society organizations, to provide views and suggestions on ways of strengthening the treaty body system. The consultation stage of the process, which had begun in Dublin, in November 2009, had continued with meetings in Marrakech in June 2010, Poznan in September 2010, Seoul in April 2011, Sion (Switzerland) in May 2011 and Pretoria in June 2011. A statement drafted in Pretoria should be finalized by the end of July 2011.
7. The intensive two-day meeting in Sion had been attended by 150 participants representing more than 90 States. The chairpersons or other representatives of all treaty bodies had discussed with them ways of improving the treaty body system. She had also attended the session. Further consultations were envisaged with academics in Lucerne (Switzerland) and with United Nations actors and selected regional mechanisms in the same city in October 2011. A meeting on the individual communications procedure was also planned. A wrap-up meeting would be held in Dublin in November 2011 and she would present her report in early 2012.
8. Summarizing the messages coming from the meetings, she said that civil society organizations had proposed many different ways of strengthening the treaty body system

involving varying degrees of complexity. One key demand, which had also been espoused some months previously by national human rights institutions (NHRIs), was that all treaty bodies should align their engagement procedures instead of opting for different formats. While States also lent moral support to the strengthening of the treaty bodies, their key message was clearly one of austerity and self-discipline, particularly in respect of the so-called “non-mandated activities” undertaken by nearly all treaty bodies, such as follow-up procedures and the development of general comments.

9. The Inter-Committee Meeting held from 27 to 29 June 2011 had focused on enhancing the effectiveness of the treaty bodies and had also discussed the harmonization of working methods. The meeting had been followed on 30 June and 1 July by the 23rd Meeting of Chairpersons, which had addressed the harmonization of working methods, the eligibility and independence of members, and enhancement of the meeting of chairpersons. Mr. O’Flaherty and Ms. Majodina had attended the meetings on behalf of the Human Rights Committee.

10. In her opening address to the Inter-Committee Meeting, she had stated that treaty body experts were at the core of the process of strengthening the treaty body system. They were capable of bringing about real change and would succeed if they were determined and united around a shared vision. She had referred to the challenges faced by the treaty bodies, namely harmonization and resources. Responsibility for harmonization lay with the treaty bodies themselves, which could bring about change through the shared vision that was progressively emerging. Resources were clearly the responsibility of States, which could not shirk their responsibilities, notwithstanding the financial and economic crisis. It was unacceptable that the treaty body system functioned with a 30 per cent reporting compliance rate, that treaty bodies were the victims of their own success and that lack of resources weakened States parties’ accountability under international human rights law.

11. A number of interesting decisions had been taken by the chairpersons at their 23rd meeting. They had decided to draft guidelines on the independence and expertise of members of treaty bodies, drawing on the Human Rights Committee guidelines adopted in 1998. They had also decided to hold their next meeting in June 2012 in Africa in order to interact with regional mechanisms and other actors. The Inter-Committee Meeting would be suspended on account of its less-than-enviable success rate in harmonizing the working methods of treaty bodies and uncertainty regarding the availability of funding in 2012 and 2013. However, if funding was available, OHCHR could support a substantive meeting or working group if the chairpersons so wished. Finally, the Meeting of Chairpersons, while noting that the autonomy and specificity of treaty bodies should be respected, recommended that the chairpersons be empowered to adopt measures concerning working methods and procedural matters that were common to all treaty bodies. The chairpersons would consult their respective committees on such matters in advance, and if a treaty body disagreed with the measures adopted by the chairpersons, it could subsequently dissociate itself from them.

12. She was pleased to learn that the Committee intended to organize a formal meeting with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women during its next session and encouraged it to include the issue of coordination and harmonization of working methods on the agenda.

13. On ratifying the Covenant on 22 June 2010, Pakistan had entered nine reservations, including a reservation to article 40 concerning States parties’ reporting obligations. The Committee had referred to the reservations in a public statement during its most recent session in New York. She was pleased to inform the Committee that the Prime Minister of Pakistan, after recently chairing an inter-ministerial meeting to discuss the ratification of the Covenant and the Convention against Torture, had indicated that Pakistan would withdraw most of its reservations to the Covenant. A number of States parties had already

objected to the reservations and she looked forward to receiving confirmation of their withdrawal in due course.

14. With regard to secretariat support, the news from the documentation services unfortunately remained unaltered. According to information regarding resource requirements for the preparation of treaty body documentation provided at the Sion meeting, the level of resources had not increased to match the growing number of treaty bodies and procedures, including follow-up procedures; the capacity to service further meetings was stretched to the maximum; and a more dramatic reduction than had been anticipated was now foreseen in the budget of the United Nations Secretariat, which would have a further negative impact on its ability to translate documents on time.

15. She was aware that financial constraints had had a negative impact on the organization of several recent treaty body sessions. The fundamental issue was that the General Assembly had not approved sufficient resources to fund the established and scheduled meetings of the treaty bodies. She shared members' frustrations and was pleased that the issues had eventually been resolved for the current session, albeit after much pressure and stress. However, the system was clearly facing a serious resource issue that should be continuously flagged with all counterparts, especially States. As reiterated during the Sion meeting, an effective treaty body system needed to be properly resourced.

16. She urged the Committee to assist in protecting the environment by using as little paper as possible. Most of the thousands of pages in members' folders would be thrown away at the end of the session. The United Nations as a whole was gradually reducing the production and distribution of hard-copy documents and some committees had already conducted paperless sessions. Since the previous session a password-protected extranet had been set up for the distribution of documents to Committee members prior to the session and it would continue to be updated with new documents. She hoped that greater reliance on the extranet between and during sessions would rationalize the documentation required and ultimately lead to a substantial reduction in the quantity of pages printed.

17. The current session promised to be a very interesting one with the consideration of State party reports from Bulgaria, Ethiopia and Kazakhstan, two of which were initial reports, and the examination of the situation in Dominica in the absence of a report. Country task forces would adopt lists of issues on the initial report of the Maldives and on the periodic reports of Turkmenistan and Iceland. A list of issues would also be prepared on Mozambique, a State party whose initial report was long overdue.

18. The Committee would also consider 20 individual communications, the progress reports submitted by the Special Rapporteur for Follow-up on Concluding Observations and the progress report on follow-up on Views, and would adopt its annual report. Several meetings would be devoted to the second reading of the Committee's significant and timely draft general comment No. 34 on article 19 of the Covenant, which dealt with freedom of expression and information.

19. **Mr. Thelin**, referring to the resource issue, drew attention to article 36 of the Covenant, which stipulated that responsibility for providing the necessary staff and facilities for the effective performance of the Committee's functions lay with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and not with OHCHR. The treaty bodies must join forces with OHCHR to ensure that the Office of the Secretary-General assigned priority to the task of safeguarding those functions. It was a serious and deplorable situation. Moreover, he feared that it would be in the interest of some States parties to allow the entire system to collapse on account of a lack of resources.

20. **Ms. Pillay** (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) assured him that OHCHR regularly reported to the Secretary-General on the question of resources. A comprehensive report would be submitted to the General Assembly at its next session.

**Adoption of the agenda (CCPR/C/102/1)**

21. *The agenda was adopted.*

**Organizational and other matters, including the report of the pre-sessional working group on individual communications**

22. **Sir Nigel Rodley**, speaking as Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Communications, said that the Group, comprising Mr. Bouzid, Mr. Flinterman, Ms. Motoc, Mr. Neuman, Mr. O'Flaherty, Mr. Rivas Posada, Mr. Salvioli, Ms. Waterval and himself, had met the previous week. Of the 20 communications before it, the Working Group proposed that 4 should be declared inadmissible, that 15 should be considered on the merits and that 1 should be postponed until the next session since the question of exhaustion of domestic remedies required further clarification.

23. An informal meeting had been held with the current Chairperson of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. She had briefed the Working Group on prominent cases, fact-finding activities, oral hearings, friendly settlements, requests for precautionary measures and internal organizational matters.

*The public part of the meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and resumed at 11.25 a.m.*

**Meeting with representatives of non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions on improving cooperation with the Committee**

24. **Mr. Stefanov** (National Institution and Regional Mechanisms Section, OHCHR) said that one of the strategic objectives of the Office was to strengthen national human rights protection systems. To that end, his Section provided capacity support to NHRIs and assisted Governments to establish new NHRIs, in line with the Paris Principles.

25. OHCHR provided secretariat support to the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC), which was composed of over 100 NHRIs, 67 of which currently had "A" status. One of the most important responsibilities of the ICC was to assess whether NHRIs complied with the Paris Principles and to accredit them with a graded status. The ICC Sub-Committee on Accreditation had a rigorous and transparent accreditation process, involving peer review to assess the degree to which NHRIs complied with the Paris Principles, both legally and in terms of their performance and effectiveness. NHRIs that were accredited with "A status" gained credibility at the national, regional and international levels.

26. The application process for accreditation now required NHRIs to report on their interaction with United Nations treaty bodies, including follow-up to treaty body recommendations. His Section supported all such interaction and conducted workshops for NHRIs and the ICC on the human rights treaty system in general. In March 2011, it had published an information sheet for NHRIs that wished to interact with the treaty bodies, providing details of their different working methods and procedures. Copies had been distributed to Committee members.

27. **Ms. Noonan** (International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights) said that a strategic priority for members of the ICC was to strengthen their engagement with the United Nations treaty bodies. That was particularly important in the light of the crucial and direct contribution the treaty bodies made to protecting human rights at the country level.

28. Treaty bodies' concluding observations served as important guidelines when establishing NHRI priorities and reinforced the legitimacy of their actions. In their efforts to bridge the gap between the international human rights system and national realities,

NHRIs had a role in contributing to the Committee's monitoring process and helping to promote the implementation of its concluding observations at the national level.

29. The ICC would welcome the appointment of a focal point for NHRIs in the Human Rights Committee, which would help the institutions to engage with the Committee in a timely fashion. In addition, the important meetings between NHRIs and the Committee should be scheduled immediately prior to the consideration of States parties' reports in order to avoid wasting human and financial resources. Accredited NHRIs should be given the opportunity to intervene during the consideration of States parties' reports, as was the current practice in the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Committee should involve NHRIs in the follow-up procedure as a matter of course and should indicate the specific role they could play in following up on the Committee's concluding observations in the country and in reporting back to the Committee on implementation. She urged the Committee to examine how it might use videoconferencing and similar technological tools in order to enhance its accessibility to NHRIs. The ICC also recommended that the Committee should meet periodically in regional centres to bring the treaty procedures closer to rights-holders and duty-holders. She called for the Committee to develop a general comment on NHRIs.

30. **Ms. Dhundale** (Danish Institute for Human Rights) said that, while her Institute had yet to submit a report to the Committee, it had submitted reports to several other treaty bodies and was currently preparing responses to the Committee's list of issues prior to reporting in preparation for the consideration of Denmark's sixth periodic report in 2014.

31. The Institute had worked closely with the Government and civil society in preparation for the universal periodic review (UPR), and had submitted its own stakeholder report under that procedure. The public, the Government and civil society had supported the proactive role played by the Institute as focal point. The Institute viewed the Government's recognition of its role as a national human rights institution as a significant breakthrough. In preparation for the UPR, the Institute had been able to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations, coordinate their efforts and facilitate dialogue between them and the Government. It expected to continue playing those roles during the process of implementing the UPR recommendations.

32. The Institute was currently compiling all United Nations treaty body and UPR reporting into a baseline study on the human rights situation in Denmark. It was hoped that the study would be instrumental in the preparation of a national human rights action plan and the development of human rights indicators.

33. The UPR process had been a positive experience for the Institute and had benefited its work with the United Nations treaty bodies. The Institute had, for example, acted as coordinator between national civil society organizations, which were currently preparing a joint NGO report relating to the Committee's list of issues prior to reporting. One of the reasons for the successful outcome of the UPR for the Institute and civil society was the explicit access the UPR guidelines gave to such institutions. She therefore suggested that the Committee might examine ways to increase its accessibility to all stakeholders throughout the reporting process in order to encourage their participation. Her Institute supported the practical recommendations the ICC had made on how that could be achieved.

34. **Mr. Liyew** (Ethiopian Human Rights Commission) said that, in 2007, his Commission had developed a project with the Government to ensure that it submitted all reports to the treaty bodies in a timely fashion. With technical assistance from the regional office of OHCHR, it had helped the Government to submit some 20 reports that had been overdue. Civil society also received technical assistance in submitting its own reports.

35. The Commission was responsible for collating information on the recommendations that emanated from the UPR and had translated the recommendations the Government had

accepted into local languages to make them accessible to all stakeholders. It had convened a follow-up workshop for stakeholders to plan the implementation of the recommendations, after which its role was to monitor implementation. It had done so by writing to all institutions to inform them of the specific recommendations that were relevant to their work. However, recommendations requiring improvement or enhancement were a challenge, since no national baselines had been established. The Commission was therefore in the process of developing a comprehensive human rights status report to serve as a baseline for all treaty body recommendations, which the Government could use to monitor progress in all aspects of human rights.

36. The Commission would welcome increased communication with the Committee, particularly in the periods between the submission of one periodic report and another. He also supported all the recommendations the ICC had made.

37. **Ms. Chanet** asked to what degree the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission had been involved in preparing the Government's replies to the Committee's list of issues (CCPR/C/ETH/Q/1/Add.1). It would also be useful to know whether the Commission could validate all the information provided in Ethiopia's initial report (CCPR/C/ETH/1). She wished to know whether, in the opinion of the Commission, the Committee should highlight any particular articles of the Covenant in its dialogue with the Ethiopian delegation.

38. **Mr. Flinterman** said that the NHRIs formed a vital link between national and international human rights mechanisms. He thanked Ms. Noonan for her recommendations and drew attention to the valuable suggestions contained in the written communication from the French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights. Ms. Noonan had suggested that the treaty monitoring bodies might adopt joint general comments, and the potential contribution of NHRIs would certainly be a suitable subject: however, such joint comments should supplement, not replace, the general comments adopted by individual bodies.

39. **Mr. Thelin** said that the current debate made a valuable contribution to the Committee's thinking about its own working methods. It was important to debate possibilities such as videoconferencing, meetings in different locations and more fact-finding or follow-up missions, although few of them were likely to be implemented in the current adverse financial climate.

40. There was a reluctance within the United Nations system to treat any one Member State differently from another. However, an assessment of the human rights record of each State might enable the treaty monitoring bodies to concentrate their time and resources on those States whose human rights situation most warranted it, and even suspend the consideration of the situation in other States altogether. Such an assessment might be prepared from the information in the treaty bodies' database, but the contribution of NHRIs would also be invaluable.

41. **Mr. O'Flaherty** said that the information provided by NHRIs was extremely valuable, but should be considered as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, the information provided by civil society organizations. NHRIs did not always take the opportunity to submit information when invited: some States had well-respected institutions which were accredited under the Paris Principles but which still did not provide information when a report from that State was being considered. Incidentally, although the accreditation system was a valuable indicator of the quality of the institution concerned, the Committee should not ignore the potential contribution of other institutions which had not, for various reasons, qualified for accreditation.

42. **Mr. Lallah** said that, unlike Mr. Thelin, he strongly believed that there should be no attempt to rank States according to their human rights record. States might have

shortcomings, which could be pointed out in concluding observations, but it was important to treat them all equally. Some States might have a good record overall, but be very deficient in certain aspects of human rights, for example because of their legacy of colonialism.

43. He agreed that the role of an NHRI was to act as an interface with the international bodies with which the national Government had undertaken commitments and with the people whose interests it represented, but also with the Government of the State concerned which, after all, provided its financing. He also agreed that the contribution of NHRIs should not be considered as an alternative to that of civil society organizations.

44. **Mr. Liyew** (Ethiopian Human Rights Commission) said that his organization enjoyed excellent relations with the Ethiopian Government. It had encountered some difficulties in its dealings with the treaty monitoring bodies because it was not accredited under the Paris Principles, so he had welcomed Mr. Thelin's call for the Committee to work with all institutions, whether accredited or not.

45. **Ms. Noonan** (International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights) said that the examples cited by the representatives of the Danish and Ethiopian human rights institutions were evidence of the value of those institutions in raising awareness among civil society and Governments. She assured the Committee that NHRIs were fully aware of the valuable contribution of civil society organizations and, indeed, devoted increasing resources to supporting them in their work.

46. Any measures which the various treaty bodies could adopt to coordinate the key elements of their work would help NHRIs to make a more effective contribution. However, she did not feel that the Committee should stop examining the human rights situation in certain States altogether. It should concentrate on the most important issues in a given State, rather than seeking to cover the entire human rights situation, which would leave it more time for the consideration of other, more complex, situations.

47. **Ms. Grigoreva** (Secretariat), turning to the subject of collaboration between OHCHR and civil society organizations, said that the credibility and value of the United Nations human rights system owed much to the participation of civil society actors. OHCHR worked with civil society actors in three main areas: building knowledge and skills; protection of the areas in which civil society actors worked; and promotion of participation. OHCHR's Civil Society Section worked to increase awareness among civil society actors about international human rights standards, information and strategies and to develop their capacity to engage effectively with the United Nations human rights system. The publication "Working with the United Nations human rights programme: a handbook for civil society actors" was available in all six United Nations official languages, as well as Farsi, Georgian and Nepali, and also on CD-ROM in a format suitable for people suffering from visual impairment. Outreach activities included regular briefings on subjects such as the strengthening of the treaty body system, a subscription-based e-mail service providing civil society actors with information tailored to their needs, and a weekly update on the activities of the treaty monitoring bodies. Over 250 updates and guidance notes had been issued in 2010.

48. The Civil Society Section worked to protect civil society actors who had suffered restrictions, intimidation or reprisals for their work with the United Nations human rights mechanisms. It had conducted an analysis of the Office's activities to protect civil society actors, document the challenges they faced, and identify best practices and the remaining obstacles to and gaps in protection of human rights defenders. She would welcome any feedback or ideas from Committee members about further ways to strengthen the relationship between the treaty monitoring bodies and civil society actors worldwide.

49. **Mr. Mutzenberg** (Centre for Civil and Political Rights) drew the Committee's attention to the "Paper for the meeting between the NGOs and the Human Rights Committee on strengthening the interaction between the Committee and NHRIs and NGOs", which had been drawn up in cooperation with Amnesty International, co-signed by 23 other NGOs and circulated to the Committee. He highlighted the main recommendations of the paper, including the importance for NGOs to know in advance which countries the Committee would be reviewing so that they had time to prepare interventions, and to know the procedures for participation and deadlines for the submission of material. It would be useful to have an updated timetable, searchable by country and including all countries, to help with planning concerning the lists of issues. It was also important to maintain the period of nine months for the public announcement of which States would be reviewed under the lists of issues prior to reporting procedure, as initially approved by the Committee. He noted that NGOs had recently been given only four months to draft and submit their reports. The inclusion in the Committee's timetable of a formal NGO and NHRI briefing of about 40 minutes before the review of each State would be most welcome, as lunch briefings were not ideal for reasons of language and sound quality. Webcasting of the Committee session was a positive development as that allowed NGOs and other stakeholders to follow the proceedings online, whether in real time or in archived form.

50. **Mr. Heiler** (Amnesty International), continuing the presentation of the paper, said that it was important for the Committee to reconsider the procedure for dealing with non-reporting States and welcomed the fact that it was starting to consider States in the absence of a report. That process should be more open and transparent, since the drafting of reports on those States in private meetings discouraged NGOs from participating and States from submitting their reports in a timely manner. Those meetings should thus be made public without delay. It would also be useful for the Committee to publish concluding observations on non-reporting States immediately following the consideration of a given country, as was the practice for other States.

51. On implementation and follow-up, more emphasis should be given to the dissemination and translation of concluding observations, particularly in local languages. For example, the Committee could ask States to send in translations to be posted on the Committee's website. It was also very important for NGOs to be able to engage in the follow-up procedure. He welcomed the increasing amount of information available online, but it would be helpful to be informed of deadlines for submission of follow-up material, so as to ensure that NGO contributions could be as effective as possible, for example, through a dedicated webpage. It would be useful if NGOs could give oral briefings prior to the presentation of periodic reports and be involved in country visits. Another proposal was to hold Committee meetings outside Geneva and New York.

52. Lastly, he noted that NGOs could play an important role in matters beyond regular business and of importance to the Committee, as they had greatly contributed, for example, towards encouraging the withdrawal of reservations to the Covenant, such as those of Pakistan.

53. **Mr. Hilaire** (Cercle de Recherche sur les Droits et les Devoirs de la Personne Humaine) said that his organization had drawn up a draft procedure for a code of conduct on the freedom of expression and association, much of which had been guided by the principles in the Covenant. It had also published research on that topic and, in November 2011, would be holding an international symposium on the harmonization of laws and policies relating to those freedoms.

54. **Mr. Thelin** commended the NGO representatives for the quality of the paper presented and endorsed all the suggestions it contained, particularly the suggestion that meetings on non-reporting States should be public. He also supported the proposal for the

creation of a database and, in that respect, encouraged NGOs to solicit support from academic and other circles to help fund the project. Once developed, the database could be linked to the OHCHR website.

55. He wished to explain to Mr. Lallah that the proposal for ranking States was meant to help those States which were faltering in their efforts to strengthen the protection of human rights. The fact was that certain States committed more serious human rights violations than others, and the proposed system would bolster the Committee's ability to focus on those violations and ensure that they were addressed.

56. **Mr. O'Flaherty** said that he was impressed with the quality of the NGO paper, which illustrated the positive contribution civil society could make to the Committee's work. He noted that some of the compliments and comments directed to the Committee in the paper should instead go to the secretariat, particularly regarding timetables and resources.

57. He welcomed the proposal to include a formal NGO and NHRI briefing before the review of each State; the Committee could address that proposal during its current session with a view to implementing it at its next session.

58. On the holding of public meetings on non-reporting States, he recalled that a discussion on working methods was already under way and changes to those methods would soon be implemented.

59. As to the NGO proposal to ensure that concluding observations were "specific, concrete and time-bound", he said that that formula was more suited to project documents than concluding observations, which often required greater distance and abstraction in addressing policy than did the former, as concluding observations fulfilled a broader function. He supported the proposal to strengthen the role of NGOs in the follow-up procedure on the concluding observations. He endorsed the proposal to receive NGO progress reports at the same time as State party follow-up reports. Lastly, such a discussion about liaison between the Committee, NGOs and NHRIs should take place once every year so that, where possible, proposals could be submitted to the plenary Committee.

60. **Ms. Keller** said that, from her experience in dealing with countries from Central Asia, it seemed that some delegations did not fully understand the process for follow-up to individual communications and would benefit greatly from more engagement with local NGOs in that regard.

61. **Mr. Iwasawa** welcomed the NGO proposal on developing the use of videoconferencing as a means of strengthening communication with national NGOs. In that respect, he wondered what the secretariat and field offices could do to help those countries which had poor Internet connections.

62. **Sir Nigel Rodley** said that he endorsed the idea of setting up a website for follow-up to individual communications similar to what was being done for concluding observations, and expressed appreciation to Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists for their sustained work towards bringing about Pakistan's withdrawal of its reservations to the Covenant.

63. **Mr. Fathalla** said that he supported all the proposals mentioned in the NGO paper. He agreed that the nine-month period to enable NGOs to draft and submit their reports must be respected. He endorsed the idea of holding meetings outside New York and Geneva, and suggested that NGOs try to convince national Governments to host meetings, so that at least one meeting a year could be hosted by a particular country, thus alleviating some of the costs borne by OHCHR.

64. Regarding NGO liaison with the Committee, it would be helpful if NGOs could meet and discuss country situations with the Committee during the session prior to that at which the country report would be considered; that would give the Committee time to reflect on the issues brought to its attention.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*