



# International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Distr.: General  
24 October 2017

Original: English

---

## Human Rights Committee 121st session

### Summary record of the 3416th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 17 October 2017, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Shany (Vice-Chair)

## Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant  
(*continued*)

*Sixth periodic report of the Dominican Republic*

---

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.

GE.17-18450 (E) 231017 241017



\* 1 7 1 8 4 5 0 \*

Please recycle A small recycling symbol consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.



*Mr. Shany, Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant**  
(continued)

*Sixth periodic report of the Dominican Republic (CCPR/C/DOM/6;  
CCPR/C/DOM/Q/6; and Add.1)*

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

2. **Ms. Abreu de Polanco** (Dominican Republic) said that many of the advances achieved in the area of human rights in the Dominican Republic reflected recommendations made by the Human Rights Committee. In recent decades, the State had undertaken intensive legislative and regulatory reforms with a view to safeguarding human rights and had ratified key international treaties as part of that process. Article 26 of the Constitution stipulated that international instruments ratified by the State had force in domestic legislation, and numerous examples could be cited of cases in which the courts had applied the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in their decisions.

3. In 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had elevated the status of its human rights division by converting it into the General Directorate of Human Rights. The Directorate coordinated the activities of the Inter-Agency Human Rights Commission, which was composed of government institutions and civil society organizations and was responsible for preparing the country's human rights reports. In 2017, a computerized system had been introduced which enabled both the Government and civil society to track the implementation of United Nations recommendations.

4. Under the 2017-2020 national action plan for combating human trafficking, public policies centred on awareness-raising, the prosecution of human traffickers and victim assistance in the form of medical, psychological and legal services. Hogar Malala, the first shelter for adult trafficking victims, had been opened in 2016.

5. The National Police Institutional Act set out specific provisions on the use of force by law enforcement officers. Allegations of police brutality were investigated by the General Inspectorate and Central Directorate of Internal Affairs of the National Police and, when there were grounds for doing so, cases were turned over to the Public Prosecution Service.

6. Under the Constitution, corporal punishment was a violation of the right to physical integrity. In 2015, the Government had established a road map for the prevention and elimination of violence against children and adolescents.

7. One of the pillars of the rule of law was an independent judiciary which safeguarded civil and political rights. A great deal of progress had been made in the area of human rights, but challenges remained. The Dominican Republic enjoyed political stability and democratic governance, and her Government was committed to continue working with the Committee to further strengthen its national institutions and meet its responsibilities under the Covenant.

8. **Ms. Cleveland** said that, although the Committee appreciated both the timely submission of the State party's report and the substantive information that it provided, she was concerned by the absence of civil society representatives at the current meeting. It would be useful to have information on how the State party engaged with civil society in the preparation of its periodic reports.

9. She wished to know whether the Covenant had been applied by domestic courts in cases other than the five examples cited by the State party, and she would be interested to learn about efforts to increase awareness of the Covenant and its Optional Protocols among judges, lawyers, civil society and the general public. Further information would also be appreciated on the institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Committee's Views in general and in the cases of *Pierre Giry v. Dominican Republic* and *Barbarín Mojica v. Dominican Republic*, in particular. She would welcome information about the

procedures that would be used to disseminate and act upon the concluding observations which would be reached by the Committee following the current dialogue.

10. Since Constitutional Court decision No. 256/14, which held that action by the Congress was required for the acceptance of the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, remained in force, she would like to know whether steps had been taken to comply with that decision by adopting the necessary legislation to re-establish the Court's jurisdiction. Information on the new timeline for adoption of the National Action Plan on Human Rights would also be helpful.

11. She wondered whether there were any general anti-discrimination laws which provided protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity and whether the courts had interpreted article 39 of the Constitution as prohibiting such discrimination. Did Salvadoran law accord equal rights to same-sex and heterosexual cohabiting couples? The Committee would welcome details on the work of the National Group for the Elimination of All Forms of Stigmatization and Discrimination. It would also appreciate information on the status and content of the bill on non-discrimination that was currently pending adoption, particularly as it related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons. Statistics on violence against such persons would also be welcome, as would information on sensitivity training for law enforcement personnel in that connection.

12. She would like to know what action was being taken to address the problems of forced labour and child labour and would appreciate statistical data on those subjects, disaggregated by economic sector. Further information on working conditions and labour inspections in the sugar cane industry would also be of interest. Finally, she would welcome information on the measures that were in place for the protection of the right to freedom of association and on the penalties for violations of those rights.

13. **Mr. Heyns** said that he would welcome the delegation's comments on reports that sex education was provided to only about one third of the children attending the country's schools. He would also like to hear about efforts to lower the country's high maternal mortality rate. In addition, in the light of the fact that the termination of pregnancy was prohibited under all circumstances and that article 37 of the Constitution stated that the right to life was inviolable from conception to death, he would like to learn more about the bill or bills dealing with the termination of pregnancy under certain circumstances that were currently before Congress.

14. He wished to know under what specific conditions the police were allowed to use force, including deadly force, whether torture was defined as a specific crime in domestic legislation and how many individuals had been prosecuted for acts of violence against persons of Haitian descent, journalists and human rights defenders. Noting that an oversight mechanism was in place for the investigation of allegations of brutality or excessive use of force by law enforcement and security officers, he would like to know what the mechanism was called, to what extent it was independent and impartial, and whether it could be used to launch *proprio motu* inquiries or whether it was necessary to wait for a complaint to be filed.

15. Lastly, he would be grateful for up-to-date information on efforts or plans to amend article 61 of the National Police Institutional Act to include a reference to the civil liability of the State in cases in which police officers were responsible for rights violations.

16. **Ms. Kran** said that she would have liked to see greater civil society participation in the reporting process, not least because of the positive impact that such participation tended to have in terms of the implementation of the Committee's concluding observations.

17. Act No. 169-14 of 21 May 2014 created a special regime for the regularization of the status of children in the Dominican Republic whose mothers and fathers were foreign nationals and lacked legal residence permits. However, given that less than one third of the people who were eligible to apply for regularization had done so, she would like to know what steps had been, or would be, taken to ensure that children who had lost their citizenship could attend school and were not discriminated against by reason of their nationality.

18. It would be useful to know what measures had been adopted to ensure that asylum seekers in the State party were aware of the resolution passed by the National Commission for Refugees in 2013 that required individuals to apply for asylum within 15 days of arrival in the country. She would like to invite the delegation to explain how the 15-day deadline was compatible with articles 2 (1) and 26 of the Covenant.

19. She wished to know what was done to guarantee compliance with the quotas established in the Act on Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities. According to the information available to the Committee, only 17 per cent of women with disabilities in the Dominican Republic were economically active, whereas the figure was twice as high for men with disabilities. With that in mind, details on efforts to address gender imbalances in the employment of persons with disabilities would be welcome.

20. In paragraph 159 of its periodic report (CCPR/C/DOM/6), the State party had affirmed that new institutional measures had not been required to uphold article 26 of the Covenant. However, the Committee had been made aware of 30 reported cases of the detention and intended expulsion of Dominicans of Haitian descent by immigration authorities, despite the fact that the persons in question were registered nationals and had presented, or attempted to present, proper documentation. She would appreciate it if the delegation would comment on those reports and describe the actions taken to prevent discrimination against Dominicans of Haitian descent.

21. She wished to know why, under the birth registration system for children born in the Dominican Republic to a foreign mother not legally resident in the country, which was mentioned in paragraph 23 of the replies to the list of issues (CCPR/C/DOM/Q/6/Add.1), responsibility for determining the status of newborns was, in some cases, placed on hospital staff. What safeguards were in place to prevent discrimination against parents on the basis of colour or nationality?

22. **Ms. Waterval** said that she would appreciate detailed information on the outcomes of the second National Gender Equity and Equality Plan and on any obstacles to its implementation. It would be appreciated if the delegation could provide statistics on the numbers of women who were government ministers, judges, public prosecutors, ambassadors, mayors and deputy mayors, among other high-level positions.

23. She would like to invite the delegation to elaborate on outstanding challenges in the prevention of violence against women, including domestic violence. With regard to sexual and gender-based violence, she wished to know how many temporary restraining orders had been issued, prosecutions carried out, sentences handed down and penalties imposed and what reparation had been granted to victims.

24. According to paragraph 10 of the replies to the list of issues, there was no centralized register for reports of gender-based violence. She would be grateful for further information in that regard and wished to know whether there were plans to create such a register. Would the delegation please comment on the steps taken to ensure that the National Information System on Gender-Based Violence was accessible to persons who were illiterate or did not have access to a computer?

25. **Mr. Santos Pais** said that he wished to know whether the Ombudsman's Office had the necessary resources to carry out its mandate fully, effectively and independently; whether, despite allegations to the contrary, the Ombudsman respected the principle of religious neutrality; whether the Office's application for accreditation under the Paris Principles had been examined; whether campaigns had been conducted to raise awareness of the Office's role and, if so, what the outcome had been and whether more were planned; and why the Office typically spent only around 70 per cent of its annual budget. He would also welcome detailed information on the number of constitutional protection (*amparo*) actions brought by the Office in the previous three years and the extent to which State bodies heeded the Office's recommendations.

26. He would welcome information on the results achieved by the "*No hay excusas*" ("No excuses") campaign to combat the sexual exploitation of children and would like to know whether the campaign was still running and when it had been launched. He would also like to know if, in addition to the 60 adult trafficking victims mentioned by the head of

delegation, any children or adolescents had been taken in by the specialized “Hogar Malala” shelter and, if so, how many.

27. He wished to know how many complaints had been made using the free, confidential hotline for reporting cases of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation and whether the panels of inquiry set up to look into suspected cases had helped to secure more convictions. It was gratifying to note that steps were being taken to regularize the migration status of foreign victims of trafficking in the State party, and it would be helpful to know what other assistance, services and reparations were provided to such victims.

28. It would be interesting to know whether the Government intended to increase the reportedly insufficient budget allocated to the Trafficking Survivors’ Protection and Assistance Unit and to establish specific mechanisms for child victims of trafficking. He would appreciate it if the delegation would describe what psychological and other support was offered to Dominican women who were trafficked abroad upon their return to the country. Information on the outcomes of the workshop on technological tools for use in child pornography investigations would also be appreciated.

29. **The Chair** asked whether the State party had begun to implement the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in its concluding observations on the initial report of the Dominican Republic (CRPD/C/DOM/CO/1), particularly those related to deinstitutionalization, the provision of medical treatment without free and informed consent and the forced sterilization of women and girls.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.10 p.m. and resumed at 4.25 p.m.*

30. **Ms. Abreu de Polanco** (Dominican Republic) said that the Dominican Republic had accepted the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights by means of a declaration issued in 1999 by the then President of the Republic, Leonel Fernández, in accordance with article 62 of the American Convention on Human Rights. However, subsequently, a group of citizens had brought an action of unconstitutionality in respect of the declaration, arguing that, under domestic law, instruments through which the Dominican Republic made international commitments had to be ratified by Congress. In its decision No. 256/14, which was legally binding on the State, the Constitutional Court had ruled that the declaration was unconstitutional. Efforts were ongoing to resolve the situation.

31. Pierre Giry was a French citizen who had travelled to the Dominican Republic in 1985. Mr. Giry had been wanted for drug trafficking by authorities in the United States of America, which had issued an international warrant for his arrest through the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). Accordingly, Mr. Giry had been arrested and sent to the United States, where he had subsequently been tried, convicted and sentenced to 28 years’ imprisonment. The Dominican Republic had invoked the exception to article 13 of the Covenant based on reasons of national security to justify its decision to deport Mr. Giry and had provided information to the Committee in that regard.

32. Rafael Mojica was a Dominican citizen whose disappearance in 1990 had been reported by his father, Barbarín Mojica. The authorities had conducted an extensive investigation but had, as yet, been unable to discover Mr. Mojica’s whereabouts, which had been the subject of intense speculation. Since enforced disappearance was a continuing offence as long as the perpetrators continued to conceal the fate and whereabouts of persons who had disappeared, the Government remained committed to investigating the circumstances surrounding Mr. Mojica’s disappearance and to cooperating with the Committee and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

33. The Government, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, had set up an online inter-institutional coordinating platform for use in monitoring the implementation of international recommendations issued by the human rights treaty bodies. The platform was open to civil society organizations, which participated in the drafting of reports submitted to those bodies.

34. **Ms. Alcántara** (Dominican Republic) said that the final assessment of the second National Gender Equity and Equality Plan was being drafted. A third such plan was being

prepared in collaboration with civil society and with technical support from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The plan would be participatory and would reflect the Sustainable Development Goals.

35. In 2015 the Ministry of Women's Affairs, with the assistance of the Government of the Republic of Korea, had established a sexual and reproductive health information centre. The centre worked with public and private educational institutions and, between 2015 and 2017, the courses it offered had been attended by over 6,000 adolescents and over 2,000 adults. In addition, two centres run by the Ministry of Public Health provided information about sexual and reproductive health, including contraception, to young people and adults. Under an agreement with the United Nations Population Fund, the centres received \$1.5 million annually in funding for its work in the area of contraception.

36. Although the maternal mortality rate remained high, it was being reduced thanks to measures focusing on the main causes: haemorrhaging, septicaemia and high blood pressure. In 2017, the rate had fallen at six of the country's nine regional health-care centres and at seven of the country's major hospitals.

37. Victims of domestic violence were encouraged to file complaints and were provided with free psychological support and legal aid. There was also a free 24-hour hotline in operation to allow women to report gender-based violence.

38. **Ms. Cruz Taveras** (Dominican Republic) said that the Government was working to eliminate all forms of discrimination, particularly in the case of vulnerable groups, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community, persons with HIV/AIDS and sex workers. The Public Prosecution Service and other government agencies were members of the Human Rights Observatory and worked with civil society organizations to combat discrimination. In the five homicide cases involving transsexual victims that the Committee had asked about, legal representation and support were being provided to the victims' families, and all five cases were in the courts.

39. The draft Anti-Discrimination Act was awaiting review by the Office of the President, and representatives of vulnerable groups had been invited to assess its text. In addition, government representatives had participated in inter-institutional panels on violence against women and transsexual sex workers. In association with civil society, various bodies had also organized training events for members of the judiciary and the police force, among others, in order to raise awareness of the rights of vulnerable groups.

40. One of the objectives of the national plan to combat violence against women and girls was for the Government to work closely with community leaders to increase the number of cases of gender-based violence that were prosecuted. There were 19 units providing care for victims of sexual and gender-based violence nationwide and a further three would be established. The percentage of persons convicted of gender-based violence who reoffended was quite low. There were two centres where survivors of domestic violence could receive psychological support, three shelters for victims run by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and a further shelter for children who had been victims of violence or whose mothers had been victims of femicides. The Government also sought to promote new positive male role models, since gender-based violence was often fuelled by sexism in society.

41. **Ms. Aguasvivas Soto** (Dominican Republic) said that regulations were in place to safeguard the rights of people subject to deportation or expulsion from the country. Such persons were able to lodge appeals and had recourse to legal measures, including habeas corpus and constitutional protection actions. An interpreter was available to provide assistance at the seven holding centres run by the Directorate-General of Migration, and communication between deportees and their families and the relevant embassy representatives was facilitated. Embassy personnel also had access to their files unless such access had to be denied for national security reasons.

42. The 15-day deadline for asylum applications was considered to be reasonable. When persons intending to seek international protection entered the country, the Directorate-General for Migration assisted them in filing their asylum application.

43. **Mr. Saladin Selim** (Dominican Republic) said that the national plan for regularizing the status of children born in the country to non-resident foreign nationals, many of whom were Haitian citizens, had been introduced under the terms of Decree No. 327 of 2013. Using birth records from 1929 to 2007, over 56,000 cases had been or were being addressed. A list of the persons who were eligible to apply under the regularization plan had been published in a national newspaper to ensure that they were aware of the opportunity that it afforded. In addition, under the terms of Central Electoral Board Resolution No. 02 of 2007, a foreign nationals register had been created to ensure that children born to foreign nationals would have a name and could be registered. Hospitals sent such records to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which then sent them on to the relevant consulate and embassy so that those children could be registered at no cost to their families.

44. **Mr. Bautista Tavares** (Dominican Republic) said that only the Central Electoral Board had access to hospital birth registers. The Board was responsible for communicating with hospitals nationwide to ensure, with the assistance of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), that as many births as possible were registered. No one listed in civil registers as having an irregular status had lost his or her rights or nationality, with the exception of some people who had been added to the register as adults. There had been a number of instances of fraud, however, in which people listed on the register had lied about their biological parentage.

45. **Mr. Saladin Selim** (Dominican Republic) said that the Central Electoral Board and the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Finance had recognized the labour rights of Haitian members of the Union of Sugar Cane Workers. As a result, over 2,700 workers in the sugar cane industry had obtained permanent residency and were eligible for pensions, although they could not vote. The cases of approximately 1,700 people had not yet been finalized.

46. **Ms. Alcántara** (Dominican Republic) said that, between January and August 2017, legal proceedings had been begun in over 800 domestic violence cases nationwide, with sentences having been handed down in over 200 cases. Statistics were compiled annually on the number of domestic violence complaints lodged with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the amount of assistance provided directly to victims of domestic violence.

47. **Ms. Cruz Taveras** (Dominican Republic) said that the Public Prosecution Service had a centralized system for the registration of all complaints filed in the country. It was regularly updated and information about specific cases under investigation could be made available where necessary, with due consideration for the protection of crime victims' privacy.

48. **Ms. Abreu de Polanco** (Dominican Republic) said that the Ombudsman's Office had budgetary independence and was highly regarded in the country. All government institutions had units that worked with civil society organizations to provide inputs for the country's reports to United Nations human rights treaty bodies.

49. **Ms. Cruz Taveras** (Dominican Republic) said that the Human Rights Unit assisted human rights defenders who represented vulnerable groups and helped members of those groups to file complaints through judicial channels. However, in some cases, victims of human rights violations that constituted privately actionable offences had chosen not to pursue the case and, since their participation was necessary in a private prosecution, their decision had led to the suspension of the corresponding investigations.

50. **Mr. Saladin Selim** (Dominican Republic) said that the child labour situation was monitored in the light of the human rights reports prepared by the United States Department of State. In recent years, in conjunction with the International Labour Organization, the Dominican Republic had submitted annual reports on that situation and on the progress made in eradicating child labour in the sugar cane industry.

51. **Ms. Cleveland** said that she would appreciate responses to her questions on court cases in which the Covenant had been invoked, the measures taken to raise awareness of its provisions and the steps taken to protect workers' rights in the sugar cane industry. In addition, she wondered what specific steps had been taken to make civil society aware that

the report now under consideration was being prepared and how many civil society organizations had been invited to participate in the process.

52. More information on the content of the draft general law on equality and non-discrimination and on the status of the various proposals that had been made for amendments to the legislation on abortion would be welcome. It should be recalled that the Committee took the position that the criminalization of abortion in all circumstances was inconsistent with the Covenant. Moreover, she wished to know what measures were being taken to reduce the high number of maternal deaths due to unsafe abortions and whether any criminal prosecutions for offences relating to abortion had taken place.

53. With regard to violence against women, it would be helpful if the delegation could provide information on the demand for and capacity of existing shelters and their accessibility to women in rural areas. In addition, further information on child marriage would be welcome.

54. **Mr. Heyns** said that he would appreciate responses to his questions on the prohibition of the termination of pregnancy; the circumstances in which it was lawful for the police to use force; the definition of torture as a specific offence; and the independence and functions of the oversight body that investigated reports of police brutality.

55. **Ms. Kran** said that she wished to know what efforts were being made to promote the employment of women with disabilities and to meet the quotas for the employment of persons with disabilities set under the Act on Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (No. 5-13).

56. **The Chair** said that he would be grateful if the delegation could provide a response to his question on the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and indicate not only the number of positions held by women in the judicial, legislative and executive branches, but also the percentage of such positions held by women.

57. **Ms. Abreu de Polanco** (Dominican Republic) said that the Act on Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities set employment quotas of 5 per cent for the public sector and 2 per cent for the private sector. The need to improve infrastructure accessibility was one of the reasons for the delay in the implementation of the quota system. The building that housed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, was being renovated to ensure that it was accessible to persons with disabilities.

58. **Ms. Alcántara** (Dominican Republic) said that there were three shelters for victims of violence and one shelter for women victims of trafficking. There were plans to construct a further three shelters. The shelters were evenly distributed across the country and worked with the staff of the emergency hotline to identify persons in need of protection. Between May 2008 and August 2017, 3,305 women and 3,690 children had been housed in shelters; those figures included 363 women and 323 children who had used the shelters between January and August 2017. Between June 2012 and August 2017, 1,425 emergency rescue operations had been carried out, a further 12,839 emergency responses to calls made to the 911 emergency hotline had been conducted, and other forms of assistance had been provided to several thousand people.

59. Child and early marriage had been identified as a major problem, and a proposal to raise the marriageable age from 16 years to 18 years had been approved. Under the Progress with Solidarity Programme, the Office of the Vice-President had conducted a study on child and early marriage which had shown that marriage was seen by some as a way out of poverty. In order to address the problem, efforts were being made to reduce poverty, change attitudes and provide the necessary psychological and emotional support.

60. **Mr. Bautista Tavaréz** (Dominican Republic) said that the Labour Code of 1992 established trade union privileges for all sectors, and those privileges were subject to judicial protection.

61. Adolescent pregnancy and child marriage were problems throughout Latin America. Under Act No. 8-92, minors were required to obtain an identity card upon reaching 16 years

of age. The Central Electoral Board had taken the precautionary measure of issuing identity cards to all pregnant adolescents to ensure that their children could be registered at birth.

62. **Mr. Shany** said that, with the intention of helping the delegation to cover all the ground possible, he would sum up the eight issues raised by Committee members in the second round of questions that had yet to be answered. They were: whether the Covenant was frequently cited in court cases and, if not, what efforts were being made to increase awareness of the Covenant among the judiciary; what coordinated measures had been taken to raise awareness of the treaty body reporting process among civil society; what types of labour conditions existed in the sugar cane industry; what specific measures were being taken to strengthen the legal protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons; what the legal situation was with regard to abortion and the termination of pregnancy, whether criminal prosecutions had taken place in that regard and what measures were being taken to reduce maternal mortality; what standards governed the use of force by the police; whether torture had been defined as a specific offence in its own right; and the nature of the independent police oversight mechanism.

63. **Ms. Abreu de Polanco** (Dominican Republic) said that there had been many cases, in addition to the examples that she had cited, in which the national courts had taken the Covenant into account. In addition, the Covenant had been incorporated into the body of constitutional law; lawyers could refer to its provisions, and judges took the favourable implications of its provisions for victims into consideration.

64. The Senate had rejected the President's proposal for the decriminalization of abortion under three specific circumstances, and the new Criminal Code had thus retained the prohibition on abortion in all cases. However, in the interest of reducing the mortality rate among pregnant women, a group of legislators had proposed that a separate law should be passed in which abortion would be decriminalized under those three circumstances.

65. **Ms. Cruz Taveras** (Dominican Republic) said that the judicial authorities had made reference to the Covenant in numerous national court cases. All vulnerable groups, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, children, adolescents, women, persons with disabilities, older persons, persons living with HIV/AIDS and migrants, would be protected under the draft general law on equality and non-discrimination, which would apply to both criminal law matters and access to goods and services.

66. Torture was defined as a specific offence under Act No. 24-97, and the pending amendments to the Criminal Code would extend the length of the sentences that could be handed down to persons convicted of that crime. The Public Prosecution Service was entirely separate from the national police force and served as a back-up for the work of the force's internal oversight mechanisms. The Service had secured the conviction and imprisonment of a number of members of the security forces.

67. The issue of access to justice for persons with disabilities was high up on the national agenda. In December 2016, the implementing regulations for the Act on Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (No. 5-13) had entered into force, and an inter-agency commission had been set up to facilitate access to justice for persons with disabilities in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Brasilia Regulations Regarding Access to Justice for Vulnerable People. The judicial authorities had adopted policies designed to improve access to justice for persons with disabilities, and the buildings of judicial bodies and of the Public Prosecution Service were currently being adapted to accommodate the specific needs of such persons. The inter-agency commission was also providing input for the national disability agenda which was being developed by the Office of the Vice-President in the light of the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

68. **Mr. Saladin Selim** (Dominican Republic) said that the reduction in the prevalence of child labour in the sugar cane industry had been due in part to the restructuring that had accompanied the 1997/98 capitalization process. Many of the once State-owned sugar plantations that had been privatized had since ceased to operate, and the most powerful corporations in that industry, including the Central Romana Corporation and the Vicini Group, had made extensive efforts to eradicate child labour.

69. In the general elections held on 15 May 2016, persons with disabilities and persons held in remand centres had been able to vote remotely.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*