



**Convention against Torture
and Other Cruel, Inhuman
or Degrading Treatment
or Punishment**

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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 5 May 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. BURNS

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER
ARTICLE 19 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 4)

Initial report of Cambodia (CAT/C/21/Add.5; HRI/CORE/1/Add.94)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Khin took a place at the Committee table.
2. The CHAIRMAN welcomed Mr. Khin, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Cambodia to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland, who would represent the State party before the Committee. Pursuant to rule 66, paragraph 2 (b), of its rules of procedure, the Committee would consider the initial report of Cambodia (CAT/C/21/Add.5) in the absence of a delegation that could respond to the Committee's questions.
3. Mr. KHIN (Cambodia) thanked the Committee for considering the report that his Government had submitted on 29 August 2002. Owing to financial constraints and the preparation of the forthcoming general elections in Cambodia, his Government had been unable to send a delegation to participate in such an important meeting. However, the report was an accurate reflection of the situation of human rights in Cambodia. Cambodia recognized and respected the norms and principles established in human rights instruments and implemented the provisions of those instruments. Considering that no country could pride itself on implementing those provisions fully, he looked forward to hearing the Committee's observations and recommendations on Cambodia's report, which he would transmit to his Government.
4. The CHAIRMAN, speaking as Country Rapporteur, said that he wished to ask a number of general questions about the report submitted by the State party before discussing in detail the implementation of articles 1 to 9 and article 16. First, he would like to know how the international instruments to which Cambodia was party were incorporated into domestic legislation. The question was an important one, since a review of the report had revealed that, although torture and ill-treatment were prohibited by law, the Constitution did not contain any definition of those terms. It appeared that Buddhist principles were used as a guideline and that, where there was doubt, the definition of torture given in the Convention should be applied. However, he wondered how the law ensured that that was done. He asked whether treaties were automatically incorporated into national legislation on ratification, or whether specific legal measures were required to that end. In other words, he wished to know whether the Government had taken the necessary steps to ensure that a definition of torture that fully corresponded to the definition set out in the Convention was directly applicable in Cambodia.
5. A number of sources, and particularly the report prepared by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for human rights in Cambodia (E/CN.4/2003/114) and the concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee on the report Cambodia had submitted in 1999 (CCPR/C/79/Add.108), had raised a number of questions about the Cambodian criminal justice system. First of all, there was some concern as to whether the judiciary was truly independent: it seemed that, chiefly for historic reasons, that might not be always the case. He therefore wished to know how many judges were practising in Cambodia, how they were appointed, the qualifications that were required of them and the grounds on which they could be removed from

office. Reports to that effect, which had been substantiated by allegations from independent non-governmental organizations (NGOs), raised some concern in that regard. He wished to know whether Cambodian judicial authorities still received instructions from various ministries. The report under consideration had indicated that the Minister of Justice issued administrative guidelines for judges, which called into question their independence. It would therefore be useful to know whether certain ministers continued to exercise control over the judiciary, or whether measures had been taken to rectify that situation. He had noted with satisfaction the increase in salaries of judges: in the light of the allegations of corruption among judges that had been brought to the Committee's attention, that was a judicious measure. If judges were better paid, they were less susceptible to corruption.

6. The Cambodian criminal justice system appeared to attach particular importance to confessions during trials, while police and judges tended to consider other types of evidence less valuable. That explained the relatively frequent incidents of police brutality, and the fact that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Human Rights Committee and several independent NGOs had expressed concern seemed to indicate that it was standard practice for the perpetrators of such violence to be treated with impunity. It was well known that in countries where confessions played a pivotal role in criminal procedures, the police had recourse to methods that were incompatible with the standards set forth in the Convention.

7. Cambodian criminal law and criminal procedure appeared to have developed from a wide range of sources, being based partly on French civil law and partly on Vietnamese criminal law, which itself derived from the Soviet penal system. Emphasis would therefore inevitably be placed on confessions and the role of the public prosecutor. In the Vietnamese and Soviet systems in particular the relationship between the judiciary and the public prosecutor's office was too close for either body to be considered independent. He believed that a large-scale civil law reform was under way in Cambodia with collaboration from Japan, and he wondered whether there were also any plans to review criminal law.

8. There were three bodies that dealt with human rights in Cambodia, and he would welcome more information about their competence and methods of work. He found it disturbing that defamation was a criminal offence under Cambodian law and that provisions against defamation were used frequently. In many countries, the concept of defamation was dealt with extensively under civil law, but including it in the criminal code was highly dangerous as the police could invoke it whenever they were accused of brutality. That deterred alleged victims from filing complaints, as they would be accused of defamation if they did so. It would be useful to have statistics on the use of that provision and to know whether anyone had recently been convicted of defamation. Another concern was that Cambodia had no independent body for investigating complaints filed against the police, nor did it have an ombudsman, although both of those institutions were very useful in preventing police brutality.

9. Paragraph 20 of the report mentioned the wide range of disciplinary measures that could be taken against perpetrators of torture or ill-treatment. However, they were administrative measures, while under the Convention States parties were bound to investigate cases of torture according to ordinary criminal law. That notwithstanding, it would be useful to know how many administrative sanctions had been imposed in cases of torture or ill-treatment, and under what circumstances the Ministry of the Interior had applied such sanctions. It would also be useful to

know whether the decision taken on 23 November 1995 had simply been quoted in the report as an example, or whether other, similar decisions had been taken and, if so, what they were. Paragraph 28 of the report stated that the authorities were “continuously” taking measures to prevent and to curb torture. It would be useful to know what those continuous efforts consisted of and which services - for example, the police or the gendarmerie - were involved.

10. Concerning the implementation of article 3 of the Convention, he noted that, according to paragraph 37 of the report, 2,938 foreigners had been expelled from Cambodia in 1995. It was important to know whether each case had been considered individually, or whether there had been a mass expulsion. In other words, was Cambodia fulfilling its obligations under article 3 when carrying out large-scale expulsions? For example, members of Falun Gong had been expelled to China, and Montagnards who had crossed the border between Cambodia and Thailand in either direction had been deported from one country to the other. He wished to know whether the decisions taken by the competent Cambodian authorities in such cases took into account the provisions of article 3 of the Convention and other instruments for the protection of refugees. Although paragraph 41 of the report stated that the Cambodian Government would consider all aspects of the issue, he hoped that such consideration was already current practice and not a plan for the future. As no specific legal obligation existed, it would be useful to know precisely which provisions bound the services carrying out the deportations to consider the extent to which each deportee faced the risk of torture.

11. Paragraphs 48 to 51 of the report, which concerned the punishment of perpetrators and accomplices in torture offences, seemed to indicate that the Government wished to punish such offences severely. However, the examples cited in support of that theory had been called into question by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Human Rights in Cambodia. The case of the Batambang prison guard who had been found guilty of having tortured a prisoner aroused particular scepticism because the sentence seemed to be relatively light in view of the seriousness of the offence. He wished to know whether it was true that the guard in question had been reassigned to a position of responsibility in that prison and, if so, whether the Government considered it normal that that individual should continue to work in a penitentiary establishment - and, what was more, in the same establishment. The example given in paragraph 50 of the report did not stand up to scrutiny because exhumation of the victim did not in itself constitute a remedy: he wished to know whether the authorities had subsequently initiated proceedings and, if so, whether those proceedings had resulted in a conviction. The same question arose in connection with paragraph 51: it was not clear whether the Kampongcham provincial prosecutor had taken legal action against the police officers concerned. It would be helpful to know the outcome of that case.

12. There was another case that raised some questions, even though proceedings were currently under way. The case concerned several prisoners who, after attempting to escape, had been caught and cruelly beaten by their guards, and had then been left for a month without medical care in utter destitution. Following that incident five guards had been prosecuted, but they had subsequently been acquitted, despite evidence that had been described by two international NGOs and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General as irrefutable. The judge who had acquitted them had suggested that it was the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior to impose on them the necessary disciplinary sanctions. The public prosecutor had apparently appealed the judge's ruling; it would be desirable to know the outcome of that appeal and what kind of sanctions the Ministry of the Interior might have imposed.

13. With regard to the State party's implementation of article 5 of the Convention, he asked the Cambodian Government to clarify to the Committee whether parliamentarians and senators enjoyed immunity from prosecution and to confirm that the Government did not extradite Cambodian nationals. He pointed out that the Convention obligated States parties to exercise universal jurisdiction over torture offences, irrespective of the nationality of the perpetrator or the country in which the offence had been committed.

14. He was surprised at the number and the diversity of authorities that had the role of judicial police (para. 65). Moreover, he found it worrying that under domestic legislation a suspect could be detained incommunicado for 48 hours, sometimes even longer. The risk of acts of torture being perpetrated was extremely high during incommunicado detention. Once charged, detainees had a legal right to ask a judge to grant bail, but they sometimes had to wait five days before the judge handed down a ruling. He asked whether detainees continued to be held incommunicado during those five days, whether they had access to a lawyer and a doctor of their choice, and whether they had the right to visits from family members.

15. He wished to have more detailed information about the legal amendment that permitted a suspect to be detained for a further 24 hours with the approval of the prosecutor (para. 74), particularly with regard to the competence of the police and the prosecutor and the possibility of asking a judge to review the lawfulness of the detention. He found it surprising that the powers of the police should be increased, particularly in respect of persons who had not yet been charged. The report also indicated that free legal assistance was provided by the bar association; he wished to know whether the Government had set up a system for providing such assistance to people remanded in custody and awaiting sentencing, especially in view of the problem posed by the lack of lawyers in the country. In that connection, he welcomed the report's candid admission that free communication between lawyers and their clients and prisoners' visits had been hampered by the competent authorities.

16. He had not fully understood the situation described in paragraph 80 of the report. Clarification was needed as to whether, in the course of a trial, there really was only one copy of the file that was passed from the investigating judge to the lawyer then the lawyer to the prosecutor. It was also unclear whether the lawyer in that situation was actually the defence lawyer.

17. The Committee would appreciate more information on the training centre for lawyers that the Government had decided to set up, particularly regarding the curriculum and the entry requirements for prospective students.

18. According to paragraph 96 of the report, Cambodia still had not concluded mutual judicial assistance agreements with other countries. That was not necessary where torture was concerned, given that States parties were obliged to provide each other with judicial assistance. The exact meaning of the term "transnational" in the expression "transnational torture offence" in that paragraph was unclear.

19. With regard to the implementation of article 16, he drew attention to the special nature of that part of the Convention, which was often somewhat neglected by both States parties and the Committee. That article covered all acts that were not encompassed by the definition of torture

but which nonetheless constituted cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and it required States parties to monitor conditions in all State institutions where people deprived of their freedom could be held, including psychiatric hospitals. In Cambodia's case, it was clear from the report that the conditions in which people were detained did not comply with the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. He was aware of Cambodia's economic difficulties, which prevented the State party from respecting international standards to the letter. It would, however, be interesting to learn whether the Government had taken any measures to remedy the situation.

20. Lastly, according to information received from NGOs, one of the major problems undermining the Cambodian judicial system was corruption. The Committee would appreciate information on whether the Government had taken measures to conduct the necessary investigations and combat the problem.

21. Mr. YU Mengjia, Alternate Country Rapporteur, commended the State for submitting the report and sending a representative from the Permanent Mission to the meeting, even if he was not in a position to answer the Committee's questions. As he himself was originally from Asia, he was well aware how overwhelming the task of re-establishing the rule of law was for the Government after so many years of conflict. Nevertheless, the State party had undertaken to uphold the provisions of the Convention, and the difficulties it encountered could not be used as a pretext for not fulfilling its obligations under that instrument.

22. With regard to the implementation of article 10 of the Convention, he noted with satisfaction that the Cambodian Government had made a considerable effort in the area of training, that assistance had been provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and that the Government had carried out various projects in the field of human rights. Nevertheless, the country suffered from a serious lack of qualified judges and lawyers, and the number of cases of torture did not appear to have decreased. It was difficult to understand why the Government's efforts had not yielded results, and he wondered how the Government planned to improve the situation.

23. Turning to the provisions of article 11 relating to the review system for detention and investigation, he said he was encouraged by the frank recognition in the report that domestic legislation was not respected. Indeed, it seemed that the police often used force to obtain confessions from people in custody, given that they had to observe the 48-hours time limit, and that they sometimes extorted money. Moreover, in some areas of Cambodia, pre-trial detention could last more than six months, which made the risk of torture particularly high. He therefore wished to know whether the Government had taken any measures to bring current practice into line with legislation. Additional information on the main characteristics of the draft Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure, which were currently being prepared, would also be welcome. Those texts contained provisions aimed at preventing judicial police officers from conducting interrogations as they wished and "without clear guidelines or orders", to quote the report.

24. Regarding articles 12 and 13 on the need to conduct prompt and impartial investigations and the right to complain, he said that the main problem seemed to be one of widespread impunity. Few alleged perpetrators of torture were prosecuted, and in some cases torturers had

been promoted, which was hardly a disincentive to use torture. Furthermore, according to information received by the Committee, the number of cases involving brutality had increased. It would be useful to know how the Government viewed that issue.

25. With regard to the right to compensation contemplated in article 14, he wondered whether the fact that disputes were often settled out of court prevented victims from fully exercising their right to compensation and allowed perpetrators of acts of torture to avoid criminal sanctions. It was also unclear whether the State compensated the victim if the offender was insolvent.

26. He noted with satisfaction that Cambodia had applied to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for assistance in the training of interrogators. It was unclear, however, what the State party intended to do to ensure rigorous implementation of the provisions of article 15 in order to prevent confessions from being elicited by force.

27. Mr. MARIÑO MENÉNDEZ, referring to the distinction between nationals and foreigners in the implementation of article 3, asked what texts governed the acquisition of Cambodian nationality and residence permits. He also sought an explanation of the exact status of the Convention in the Cambodian legal system. In particular, he would like clarification as to whether the Cambodian regime was dualistic, requiring enabling legislation in order to make the treaties to which it had acceded binding, and whether the Convention had ever been applied directly by a Cambodian court. Additional information on the rules for granting the right to asylum to the Montagnards who travelled between Cambodia and Viet Nam would be useful. He failed to understand why those people were often apparently treated as foreigners and summarily deported. Cambodia had ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol thereto but had not set up a law on refugees for its real application (para. 36). Yet it was obliged under those instruments to consider any asylum applications on a case-by-case basis. In that connection, it would be interesting to learn what contacts Cambodia had with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which had apparently not been authorized to deal with the situation on the border with Viet Nam.

28. Trafficking in persons was an increasingly serious problem, and the victims were mostly illegal immigrants. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Human Rights in Cambodia had indicated that a bill to suppress kidnapping and trafficking in and exploitation of persons was being drafted with a view to replacing the 1996 Act. It would be useful to learn exactly what progress had been made and whether the State party, rather than simply considering illegal immigration to be an offence, which would only make the population concerned more vulnerable, intended to intensify measures to combat trafficking in persons. Specifically, information should be provided on whether the Government planned to accede to such international instruments as Convention No. 105 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour and ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. The latter would surely protect the rights of the Montagnards.

29. Additional information on the training of judges and prosecutors would be helpful: whether a law degree from a university or obtained through other channels was needed, whether a specialized training centre for university graduates or others might be established, and so forth.

30. Mr. CAMARA said that he would like more detailed information about the judicial system, especially about the people working in it and the rules governing its operation, particularly in the area of criminal procedure. Having noted that the Statute of Judges was still in preparation (para. 114), he was surprised that only the executive and legislative powers had been regulated since the adoption of the Constitution in 1993. It would be useful to know exactly what the status of judges and prosecutors was and, in particular, whether they had the general status of civil servants during the transition period. That would pose a serious problem if it was the case, for civil servants had to obey the orders of their hierarchical superiors, judges had a duty not to obey anyone. Moreover, there were still far too few judges and prosecutors; it ought, however, to be possible to resolve the problem of training through international assistance - on condition, of course, that there was real political will in that regard.

31. A reliable judicial system was crucial for all countries, for justice was the only way of ensuring domestic security. At the international level, justice inspired respect and confidence. It would scarcely be possible to attract foreign investors if there was no guarantee that when a dispute arose they would be able to obtain justice that was consistent with the standards of their own countries, or at least with international standards. He therefore wished to emphasize to the State party the importance of treating justice not as an ordinary service, but as a real power, and of abiding by universally recognized international standards.

32. Mr. YAKOVLEV said that he wished to associate himself with Mr. Camara's comments about strengthening the judicial system. The judicial system was an essential part of any organized and advanced society which made it possible to guarantee the primacy of the principle of equality and the impartial and consistent application of legal norms. That presupposed the existence of a sound system in which the judicial institutions played a central role. A true judiciary with responsibility for the criminal justice machinery could serve as a catalyst for the development of State institutions and the attainment of social justice.

33. As to improvements to the criminal justice system, the Committee attached great importance to the preliminary inquiry stage in other words, the period during which a suspect or the perpetrator of an offence, having been deprived of liberty was isolated from the rest of the world and was consequently at risk of being subjected to torture. Torture did not just cause serious harm to the victim but was also an indication that justice was not playing the key role that it should.

34. From the time their custody began, suspects or defendants must immediately be able to contact a lawyer and, if necessary, receive medical attention from a doctor. Their families must also be informed of their detention. That was the only way to minimize the risk of torture. In Cambodia, however, instead of a sitting judge it was the prosecutor and then an investigating judge who ordered detention. Moreover, while in custody defendants did not have access to the investigating judge, even though he or she was the only person empowered to authorize the presence of a defence lawyer. Custody, initially limited to 48 hours, could be extended on instructions from the prosecutor.

35. The State party should therefore endeavour to limit the role of the prosecution during the preliminary investigation and keep the period of incommunicado detention to a minimum, since that was the only way of averting the risk of torture. Strengthening judicial institutions was not

just a question of organization or financial resources: it should above all seek to enlighten ways of thinking, so that judges did not simply act as indicters but enjoyed the necessary independence and authority to administer justice with complete impartiality.

36. Ms. GAER said that she wished to know under what conditions - specifically, by whom and with what assistance - the State party's report had been compiled. It was a shame that, notwithstanding the numerous examples provided in the report, it had not been possible to find out what had happened in the cases that had been opened. Similarly, a wealth of information had been provided on the training that had been organized for the police, the army, prison staff, judges, defence lawyers and doctors, among others (paras. 98-112), but nothing had been said about the specific curriculum, especially about the teaching of methods of detecting signs of torture and the reporting procedures to be followed in such cases.

37. With regard to the number of persons in detention (para. 132), it would be helpful if the State party provided, first, more extensive information on the situation of women, who represented 10 per cent of people in pre-trial detention yet barely 0.5 per cent of those convicted and, secondly, data that was disaggregated not just by gender, but also by ethnicity, type of offence and region in which the offence had been committed. Details on the penalties imposed on persons found guilty of having used force to obtain confessions would also be welcome, particularly insofar as the figures provided in the table on motions submitted by accused persons to dismiss forced confessions (para. 156) indicated that there were many of them.

38. Turning to paragraph 44 of the report, she noted that acts of torture were not only incompatible with Buddhism, but also with the other faiths represented in Cambodia. Drawing attention to the information contained in paragraph 183, she asked whether any acts of cruel and inhuman treatment perpetrated by State agents who had been incited or ordered to do so had been reported. She requested clarification as to the number of cases where penalties prescribed by law had been imposed on perpetrators of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (para. 185). Reports by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had repeatedly mentioned the problems arising from trafficking in persons, and she asked whether it was true that illegal immigrants, who were victims of such trafficking, were not treated like persons whose rights had been violated but were prosecuted for infringing immigration legislation. She also wondered whether the Government intended to step up its efforts to combat human trafficking, particularly concerning aspects pertinent to the application of the Convention.

39. The Committee had learned that female detainees were often raped, or threatened with rape, by the military police and prison personnel. She would welcome information on measures taken or contemplated by the State party to prevent such acts of violence. Specifically, she wondered what the complaints procedure for such cases was, whether investigations had been opened into reported cases, whether there were plans to staff women's prisons with female personnel and whether there was any statistical data on sexual violence in prisons.

40. She would welcome information on the whereabouts of Mr. Thich Tri Luc, whose secular name was Pham Van Tuong. He was a member of the Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam and had disappeared in 1994 after having been forcibly expelled to Viet Nam.. She would also like information on the repatriation by the Vietnamese authorities of persons, especially Montagnard refugees, seeking asylum in Cambodia.

41. Mr. RASMUSSEN joined other members of the Committee in commending the initial report of Cambodia. Unfortunately, the absence of a delegation had made it impossible to establish a dialogue, which was a fundamental element in the prevention of torture. He hoped that the questions raised by Committee members would nevertheless be answered, perhaps even during the current session. He wished to receive details on the training of prison medical personnel and on the medical examinations given to detainees on admission to prison; he wondered whether such activities were carried out in accordance with the Manual on Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol). He would also like to know the ratio of prison population to prison capacity in order to estimate the extent of prison overcrowding. The information provided in paragraph 133, according to which prisons and places of detention were controlled by the Ministry of the Interior, was cause for concern, since judicial systems were usually placed under the Ministry of Justice. He had been somewhat surprised by the information contained in paragraph 186, and he wondered what would happen if acts of violence were perpetrated in prisons. He would also welcome information on the conditions of detention of juveniles, the existence of separate detention centres for minors and the definition of the term “minor”.

42. The CHAIRMAN said that impunity in Cambodia was cause for concern: not a single member of the Khmer Rouge had been prosecuted for crimes committed while that group had been in power, and no one had been tried for the murder of Sam Rainsi, a member of the opposition party. Nor had any suspects been interrogated in connection, with the assassination of more than 80 members of United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC). Those facts were an indication of the deplorable state of the Cambodian justice system. He asked whether the Government intended to open investigations into those cases. He hoped that the questions raised by Committee members would be answered during the current session. Otherwise the Committee would issue provisional concluding observations and recommendations, which would be transmitted to the representative of the State party on 12 May 2003 at 3 p.m.

43. Mr. KHIN (Cambodia) thanked the Committee members for their comments and questions, which he would communicate to the Cambodian Ambassador and the relevant minister in Phnom Penh.

44. Mr. Khin withdrew.

The meeting was suspended at 12.20 p.m. and resumed at 12.40 p.m.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS (agenda item 2)

Proposals for reform of the treaty body system

45. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee members to express their views on a background paper submitted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights which contained proposals for reforming the working methods of treaty bodies with a view to improving the effectiveness of international human rights instruments. The paper did not have a symbol and had been distributed in English only. It included proposals for reforming the system of mandatory reporting to treaty bodies as well as the views of several bodies and experts that had already considered the issue. The aim of the proposed reform was to

rationalize the working methods of the various bodies and to ensure greater coordination between those bodies in order to ease the burden on States parties. He suggested that the Committee should immediately address the proposals contained on page 12 of the document which were entitled “A more coordinated approach”.

46. Mr. EL MASRY said that all the proposals in the paper before the Committee were based on the notion of preparing a single report for consideration by all treaty bodies. According to the committees that had already expressed their views on the issue, that was unlikely to be a viable solution. It might be useful to devise an intermediary approach that consisted of updating and expanding the core document and submitting more focused thematic reports to each committee. For example, periodic reports could be compiled on the basis of a committee’s list of issues, which would be transmitted to the States parties well in advance, and of the State party’s replies. The guidelines for the form and content of periodic reports could also be revised so that reports would no longer be presented article by article while greater emphasis would be placed on the recommendations made by the Committee during its consideration of the previous report and the State party’s responses. Such a format would facilitate a more structured debate.

47. The CHAIRMAN noted that the Committee had already decided to transmit to States parties well in advance the list of issues it would compile after reading each periodic report.

48. Mr. MAVROMMATIS said that the only realistic approach would be to form a standing coordination committee having objectives and priorities that would be based on a document prepared by the Secretariat. The task of such a committee would be to harmonize the rules of procedure and practices of the various treaty bodies. The idea of requesting a single report would only be workable if there was a single committee that constantly met to consider the ways in which the provisions of all human rights instruments were being implemented. Progress could be achieved only through pragmatic coordination.

49. Mr. MARIÑO MENÉNDEZ supported the comments made by Mr. Mavrommatis. The Committee against Torture was a specialized body and should therefore consider only specific reports. Moreover, although he believed that inter-committee meetings could result in some useful suggestions concerning coordination, he did not consider the idea of a single report judicious.

50. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should continue to discuss the issue during the afternoon meeting as the current meeting was running late.

51. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.