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the Elimination
of all Forms of
Racial Discrimination**

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1741st MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Monday, 27 February 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. de GOUTTES

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

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

Ninth to thirteenth periodic reports of El Salvador (CERD/C/471/Add.1; HRI/CORE/1/Add.34/Rev.2)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, the members of the delegation of El Salvador took places at the Committee table.
2. Mr. MELÉNDEZ (El Salvador), introducing the combined ninth to thirteenth reports of El Salvador (CERD/C/471/Add.1), said that the document had been prepared by an inter-institutional team comprising members of all relevant ministries. The Office of the Procurator for the Protection of Human Rights had declined the invitation to participate, fearing that its involvement in the compilation of the report might compromise its independence as a monitoring mechanism.
3. Unlike in other Latin American countries, cultural characteristics identifying indigenous peoples of El Salvador were no longer visible. The country had acquired a homogeneous, mestizo society in which traditions, legends, customs and manual crafts had survived; that was confirmed by the “Indigenous profile of El Salvador” completed in 2001 (report, para. 156). El Salvador had no minorities of African descent.
4. The rights of ethnic and linguistic minorities were enshrined in the Constitution. Article 3 provided for equality before the law and the enjoyment of civil rights, irrespective of a person’s nationality, race, gender or religion. Article 62, paragraph 2, stipulated that indigenous languages spoken in El Salvador were part of the country’s cultural heritage and must be preserved, disseminated and respected as such. Article 63 affirmed the importance of the country’s artistic, historical and archaeological heritage and provided for its protection.
5. Progress in the legislative field included the adoption of constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination. Article 58 of the Constitution stipulated that education in any institution could not be denied on grounds of race. Article 292 contained provisions concerning acts of racial discrimination by public servants; details were contained in paragraph 21 of the report. Racial discrimination in admission to higher education was prohibited, any breaches being punishable by law. Under article 246 of the Criminal Code, discrimination in employment was a criminal offence; the full text of the article was contained in paragraph 18 of the report. Pursuant to the Act on the determination of refugee status, any persons who had reasonable grounds for fearing persecution, including on the basis of race or ethnicity, were eligible for asylum.
6. The Ministry of Education conducted training programmes on values, the objectives of which were described in detail in paragraph 190 of the report. In connection with those programmes, the Ministry had published a book entitled “El Libro de los Valores”, which contained a collected edition of all documents published to date on issues such as solidarity, tolerance, equality, freedom, respect, responsibility, justice and peace.

7. In 2004, the following question had been added to the multiple-purpose household survey questionnaire: “Do you consider yourself as belonging to an indigenous people by virtue of your ancestry, customs and/or traditions?”
8. In 1995, the Indigenous Affairs Unit had been set up within the National Council for Culture and the Arts. The Unit was mandated to promote recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples; it provided support to indigenous communities and organizations; and it promoted and disseminated indigenous culture. Indigenous persons could submit matters of concern directly to it. The Unit had carried out a number of activities at the national and international levels to raise the profile of indigenous peoples. It was responsible for facilitating cooperation between indigenous community organizations, the Government, NGOs, international organizations and professionals working in the field of indigenous affairs.
9. In 2001, a Multisectoral Technical Committee had been set up comprising members from various ministries and indigenous groups. The Committee’s first task had been the compilation of the “Indigenous profile of El Salvador”. The Ministry of Education, the National Council for Culture and the Arts, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, and the World Bank had conducted a joint study with indigenous participation, which had provided information on various aspects of indigenous life. Details were contained in paragraph 156 of the report.
10. Between 1992 and 2002, El Salvador had hosted a series of meetings relating to indigenous affairs, including a forum on the rights of indigenous peoples, five ethnolinguistic congresses, two indigenous peoples’ symposiums, a forum on indigenous peoples and biological diversity, and a meeting of indigenous women.
11. In the area of indigenous peoples’ cultural rights, the Government had made the preservation and dissemination of the Nahuatl language a priority. The National Council for Culture and the Arts had conducted a research project that had resulted in the publication of textbooks in the Nahuatl language; Nahuatl language classes were offered in 16 primary schools; and children in communities where Nahuatl was still spoken were taught the language in the framework of a project entitled “Revival of the Nahuatl language”. A number of books by indigenous writers had been published and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had been translated into Nahuatl Pipil. The Second Central American Indigenous Day on the Earth, Environment and Culture had been held in 2000, in cooperation with the Salvadoran National Indigenous Coordinating Council. The National Council for Culture and the Arts worked with indigenous women on issues such as the role of aid in national development; it also encouraged the exchange of experiences among indigenous women leaders.
12. In 2000 and 2001, the Indigenous Affairs Unit had conducted 14 national workshops on intercultural education and preventive health care. A study had been carried out on indigenous peoples, health and living conditions in El Salvador, details of which were contained in paragraph 165 of the report. Cultural centres in communities with a large proportion of indigenous people had developed programmes to promote traditional medicine. Measures had also been taken to improve access to health care, nutrition and birth registration in several municipalities with a large indigenous population.

13. Efforts were being made to incorporate indigenous education into the national education system. In the framework of the National Education Plan 2021, special programmes had been introduced to promote tolerance and intercultural relations in schools.

14. Legislative measures taken to promote the rights of other vulnerable groups included the establishment of a national council on integrated care for persons with disabilities in 1993 and the adoption of equal opportunity legislation in 2003. The action plan formulated to implement disability legislation was currently being updated. The plan provided for user-friendly public transport systems for persons with disabilities; accessibility of public buildings for the disabled; special licence plates and driving licences for persons with disabilities; and the training of some 500 persons in Salvadoran sign language.

15. The 2001 Human Immunodeficiency Virus (Prevention and Control) Act had been adopted with the aim of preventing infection, and monitoring and regulating treatment; establishing the obligations of persons carrying the virus; defining national policy geared to comprehensive treatment; and protecting the rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS. Universal access to antiretroviral treatment had been available since 2001 and multidisciplinary teams had been formed to provide assistance to persons living with HIV/AIDS. In November 2005, El Salvador had hosted the third Latin American and Caribbean Forum on HIV/AIDS/STD, the fourth Central American Congress on STD/HIV/AIDS (CONCASIDA), the fourth Central American Encounter of People Living with HIV/AIDS, and the first Central American Presidential Summit on HIV/AIDS.

16. Measures taken for the protection of the rights of migrant workers included the accession in 2004 to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the establishment of a Vice-Ministry of Foreign Affairs with responsibility for developing and coordinating public policies concerning Salvadorans abroad; and the establishment of a unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for, inter alia, defending the rights of Salvadorans abroad and safeguarding their interests. Agreements had been concluded with Guatemala and Mexico on safe, orderly and dignified procedures for the repatriation of Salvadoran migrants and the protection of victims of human trafficking. The formulation of action plans to implement the agreements was under way.

17. Awareness campaigns had been launched in schools to alert students to the dangers of undocumented migration, and relevant educational materials had been distributed in El Salvador's five largest educational establishments. Governmental institutions, international organizations and civil society had also enhanced their cooperation to develop a comprehensive communication strategy on the dangers of illegal migration and trafficking in persons and to identify ways of ensuring the protection of migrants' rights. Posters and leaflets on human trafficking had been distributed to Salvadoran Foreign Office personnel and their Guatemalan counterparts. In 2005, a migrant holding centre had been established on the border between El Salvador and Guatemala for migrants expelled from Mexico; special emphasis was placed on the protection of vulnerable groups of migrants such as children. Measures were also being taken to regularize Nicaraguan and Guatemalan migrants.

18. Additional efforts must be made in the areas of awareness-raising, institutional capacity-building, and the promotion of indigenous culture in education through, inter alia, the incorporation of indigenous issues in curricula, teacher training and culturally relevant teaching materials. The National Council for Culture and the Arts planned to incorporate indigenous questions in national consultations on cultural issues aimed at the formulation of pertinent public policies. Efforts to promote indigenous identity must be sustained and an indigenous perspective must be incorporated into the activities of key ministries. Implementation of the recommendations made in the “Profile of indigenous peoples” must be monitored closely.

19. Although limited resources, structural problems, natural disasters, drug trafficking and the decline in development aid hampered progress in the implementation of anti-discrimination programmes, the Government was working diligently to identify alternative sources of funding in order to honour its international commitments. El Salvador was also participating in work on the draft United Nations Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

20. Ms. DAH, Country Rapporteur, expressed appreciation for the resumption of dialogue between the Committee and El Salvador following a 10-year hiatus in which the country had been involved in efforts to implement the peace process following the civil war of 1980 to 1992. Although she welcomed the updated core document on El Salvador (HRI/CORE/1/Add.34/Rev.2), the description of the country’s ethnic composition was no more detailed than it had been 10 years previously. It maintained that the country’s population was partially homogenous with a mestizo majority. Moreover, in El Salvador’s periodic report, it was stated that the Salvadoran population did not comprise groups with differing racial characteristics and that, consequently, there was no discrimination on grounds of race. It was also stated that there was no black population in the country.

21. The report attributed that situation to El Salvador’s geography, stating that the land area was small and had been conducive to racial mixing. Yet no mention had been made of the effects of colonization, the massacres of 1932, the Las Hojas massacre of 1983 or the death squads during the civil war, which together had had the effect of severely reducing the indigenous population. The report did not provide any statistics for the number or socio-economic distribution of the indigenous component of the population, despite the fact that a World Bank study had concluded that indigenous people made up some 12 per cent of the population. Yet, belying the characterization of the population as homogenous, subsequent paragraphs of the report referred to indigenous community organizations, the education of indigenous children, the Indigenous Affairs Unit and the organization of an indigenous peoples’ rights day in 1999. It was important to resolve that contradiction, especially since the Committee, in its concluding observations concerning the third to eighth periodic reports (A/50/18), had said it could not accept the assertion that, because there were no physical distinctions between the indigenous population and the population as a whole, and because the number of indigenous persons was insignificant, no racial discrimination existed in El Salvador.

22. In paragraphs 14 to 16 of the report, the State party appeared to be restricting the scope of its obligations under the Convention to the areas of employment, education and health. Likewise, it had reformed its Criminal Code to address the crime of apartheid, but had failed to take racial discrimination into account. Moreover, indigenous peoples did not appear to be included in efforts to provide protection for vulnerable groups, despite the fact that a number of studies had demonstrated the precarious nature of their situation owing to their extreme poverty.

23. She welcomed the efforts of the Government to restore peace through the adoption of the Agreement on Human Rights in 1990, the signing of the Peace Accords in 1992 and the establishment of the Truth Commission. She urged the Government to take steps to provide compensation to the families of victims, such as those of the Las Hojas massacre, despite the fact that amnesty had been granted to the perpetrators. There was a lack of detailed statistics in the report regarding the economic, social and cultural rights enjoyed by indigenous peoples. Consequently, the Committee's previous concluding observations to the effect that the domestic legislation had not been amended to cover indigenous persons, nor constitutional laws adopted for the recognition of their specific rights, remained valid. The enjoyment of rights that indigenous peoples shared with the rest of the Salvadoran population in accordance with the principle of equality and non-discrimination was hampered by their precarious economic situation. Thus, their access to justice was limited by the remoteness of their communities and the prohibitive costs involved. She requested information on the level of representation of indigenous peoples in decision-making bodies, particularly in the areas of administration of justice and law enforcement.

24. With regard to the right to work, indigenous peoples and migrant workers were subject to inequality in terms of access to employment, levels of remuneration and conditions of work, in addition to a marked tendency towards discrimination against women. She asked for information on the unemployment rate. Despite the ratification by El Salvador of the International Convention on Migrant Workers, along with indigenous inhabitants, migrant workers had the lowest school enrolment and literacy rates. The Spanish-oriented single-culture approach of the education system tended to reinforce the marginalization of those groups. She looked forward to receiving information in El Salvador's next periodic report on progress made in teaching indigenous languages in the informal education sector.

25. She wished to know what measures had been taken or were envisaged in order to address the double discrimination to which indigenous girls and women were subjected. What progress had been made as a result of efforts to raise awareness of the culture of indigenous peoples? She suggested that such efforts should aim to portray indigenous culture from a vibrant, modern standpoint, rather than relegate it to museums.

26. Regarding land rights, she was concerned that article 105 of the Constitution was more favourable to commercial interests than to the interests of citizens. She asked whether indigenous peoples were consulted when mining concessions were granted on their land. It was worrying that many indigenous families could not even sustain themselves because their landholdings were so small. Indigenous peoples lacked a vehicle for self-expression and citizen participation, which denied them the possibility of improving their communities or acting as fully-fledged Salvadoran citizens.

27. The delegation should indicate the number of migrant workers living in El Salvador and their countries of origin, and also the number of Salvadoran migrants living outside the country, particularly those who had emigrated to the United States of America. She asked whether migrant workers from other countries in Central America could apply for Salvadoran nationality, and requested clarification of an agreement between El Salvador and Nicaragua regarding migrants.

28. Greater attention should be paid to publicizing the Convention in El Salvador. Values training programmes should include the issue of racial discrimination. She asked why the Office of the Procurator for the Protection of Human Rights had not participated in drafting the current periodic report and requested examples of cases that had been dealt with by that Office.

29. Mr. BOYD said that he wished to reiterate the Committee's deep concern, expressed in its previous concluding observations, at the lack of effort by the authorities to collect information regarding the situation of indigenous, ethnic and other minorities, particularly when there appeared to be clear evidence that the indigenous minorities lived in conditions of extreme economic marginalization. That concern was still valid today, given the fact that approximately 12 per cent of the Salvadoran population were reported to be of indigenous origin and that 99 per cent of those people lived in poverty or extreme poverty. In its concluding observations, the Committee had recommended that reliable quantitative and qualitative information should be systematically collected and analysed to evaluate progress in the elimination of racial discrimination and to monitor closely the situation of marginalized persons and groups. The current report had essentially failed to follow those clear recommendations. Moreover, its denial of the existence of any groups with distinguishable racial characteristics, of blacks among the Salvadoran population, or indeed of any racial discrimination in El Salvador appeared to constitute a decision to ignore those groups. The report also stated that there was no specific legislation providing for the recognition of indigenous peoples.

30. The Committee had never encountered a State party in which racial discrimination did not take place, and therefore rejected all claims that such discrimination did not exist. Moreover, NGO reports had made reference to discrimination against people of African descent. He would appreciate some explanation of the report's apparent unwillingness to acknowledge racial and ethnic differences in El Salvador and the resulting continued marginalization of racial minorities and indigenous people. The contradiction was all the more baffling since the report contained information on measures to uphold the rights of indigenous people. The delegation should provide further information on measures to increase enjoyment of the substantive rights and protections contained in the Convention.

31. Mr. PILLAI asked whether the statement in the State party's core document that the political system was pluralist indicated that Salvadoran society as a whole was pluralist and that the existing political parties represented such a society.

32. He requested additional demographic data, particularly on the indigenous population. The Committee regretted that information on efforts to preserve indigenous cultures and languages, which the delegation had promised during consideration of the previous report in 1995, had not been received. Particularly since El Salvador had not complied with the recommendations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights concerning the incident in the community of Las Hojas, further information on efforts to uphold the rights of indigenous peoples would be welcome. Despite the apparent contradiction between the State party's denial of the existence of indigenous people in its territory and its efforts to improve indigenous people's lives, the Government's approach to its indigenous communities did appear to have changed for the better.

33. It would be useful to have further information on the current status of the questionnaire for the 2006-2007 census, and on the round tables responsible for drawing up the questionnaire.

34. Given that the report described several special measures that had been taken to improve the situation of indigenous people, he failed to understand the denial in paragraph 34 of the need for such measures in relation to different racial groups. He requested disaggregated information on the level of enjoyment of the rights embodied in article 5 of the Convention by different sectors of the population.

35. He asked what language the courts used. How did people who did not speak that language gain access to the courts? Was there a system to provide support for the poor to enable them to bring cases to court?

36. Further details on the size of landholdings and the tenure system should be provided. Did any groups or communities suffer because they were landless? Given the dearth of land and other means of production, indigenous people were reportedly facing alarming poverty, Was it true that 76 per cent of them did not have land sources?

37. Many NGOs, indigenous communities, and Latin American and Caribbean bishops had expressed concern at El Salvador's signing of the Central American Free Trade Agreement with the United States of America. They claimed that insufficient attention had been paid to human rights, particularly those of indigenous people, in the terms of that Agreement. What measures had the Government taken to protect the rights of indigenous people under the agreement?

38. Mr. SICILIANOS pointed out that the inherent contradiction between the denial of the existence of indigenous people in the State party and measures taken by the Government to uphold their rights had been in evidence in the delegation's introduction to the report. It was difficult to understand why the massacre of 1932 was still being used as an explanation for the apparent invisibility of indigenous communities. The Government had a duty to recognize the responsibility of the State in that event. The delegation should confirm whether election campaigns always began in Izalco, the site of that massacre. And it should be more specific about the symbolic and practical obstacles to ratifying ILO Convention No. 169.

39. The Committee would welcome additional information on the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation. While the report contained a full account of that legislation, there was scant information on cases that had been brought before domestic courts.

40. He commended the State party for its ratification of the International Convention on Migrant Workers. More details on the right of children of illegal immigrants from Honduras and Nicaragua to attend school, and on the rights of those immigrants in general, would be useful.

41. Mr. VALENCIA RODRÍGUEZ asked for updated information on any cases of discrimination on grounds of race, apart from the three employment cases and one *amparo* application mentioned in the report.

42. While article 292 of the Criminal Code prohibited acts that promoted or incited racial discrimination, that provision was not fully in line with article 4 (a) of the Convention. Likewise, although the report affirmed that no organized or propaganda activities promoted or incited racial discrimination in the State party, under article 4 (b) of the Convention such activities should be criminalized. The State party should take steps to amend the current legislation in accordance with article 4.
43. The State party should provide training courses on human rights, and particularly on the rights contained in the Convention, for all members of the police force. It should also clarify whether naturalized Salvadorans had the right to vote in elections as well as referendums.
44. It would be useful to learn whether the right of indigenous people to maintain their customs, languages and traditions was protected under the Constitution. How many people spoke only the Nahuatl language and how many were bilingual in that language and Spanish? The delegation should indicate the attendance rates at the 16 basic-education schools that provided classes in Nahuatl, and the academic results achieved in those schools. It would be useful to have additional information on the results of the efforts of the Indigenous Affairs Unit to create employment for indigenous people in the areas of education, health, human rights and the environment.
45. Mr. AVTONOMOV asked whether the current anti-discrimination legislation was enforced in practice. If so, why had so few cases been brought before the courts?
46. The reporting State should explain why it claimed that indigenous people were not identifiable, when clear efforts were being made by those people to organize their own communities and protect their rights. It would be useful to learn whether official statistics on the demographic composition of the population, particularly on ethnic origin, were collected. If not, how could the Government reliably assess the situation of indigenous people and any potential discrimination against them?
47. It was difficult to understand why the Government had not ratified ILO Convention No. 169. Did it plan to ratify the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education? Since it had ratified the Protocol of San Salvador, he failed to understand why it had not ratified the American Convention on Human Rights in the area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It would be useful to know whether the State party had ratified any other instruments of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.
48. Mr. AMIR noted that, while the rights of indigenous people were not yet protected under the State party's legislation, the report suggested that a cultural shift was taking place towards mutual respect between peoples and respect for the rights of others.
49. The delegation should respond to the assertion by ILO that indigenous children did not have equal access to education, and that in rural areas indigenous workers were paid less than others for the same work. It was unclear why the State party had ratified ILO Convention No. 107 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Populations when its domestic legislation did not recognize indigenous people.

50. He requested additional information on the protection of the rights of people with physical and mental disabilities, and further comment on whether women were considered to be a vulnerable group, as suggested by paragraph 141 of the report. He was also curious to know why persons of indigenous origin were not authorized to wear their traditional dress.

51. There was every indication, from its expressions of a desire for change, that El Salvador would soon be in a position to declare full recognition of its indigenous population.

52. Mr. CALI TZAY referred to El Salvador's obligations under the International Convention on Migrant Workers as a host country to migrant workers, and asked the delegation to comment on NGO reports of acts of discrimination against the children of migrant workers attending State schools.

53. Turning to the rights of indigenous peoples, he noted that the report had addressed only the issue of cultural rights. He therefore wondered whether they also had economic, social and political rights.

54. With reference to the revival of ancestral languages, he asked whether the Nahuatl language was being taught for the purpose of retaining it as a historic language, or whether the intention was that it should be an official language of daily use and communication. Praising efforts under way to establish indigenous issues as a cross-cutting theme within the national education system, he asked the delegation to define the concept of "intercultural education", as mentioned in paragraph 159 of the report, and to explain what the Government meant by integrating the culture of indigenous peoples.

55. The initiative taken by the National Council for Culture and the Arts in organizing workshops in celebration of an indigenous peoples' rights day in 1999 was laudable, but he wondered why El Salvador had not ratified ILO Convention No. 169, which had been discussed on that occasion.

56. Mr. YUTZIS said the Committee attached great importance to dialogue with reporting States because it enhanced the impact of efforts by States to implement the provisions of the Convention. He mentioned his professional experience with El Salvador, its indigenous groups and its NGO community, and said that after reading the periodic report submitted by the Government and the NGO report on conditions in El Salvador, he was inclined to turn a blind eye to statements that there were no indigenous communities in El Salvador. The extensive coverage of protection of indigenous peoples in paragraphs 149 to 168 of the report proved that the existence of indigenous groups was indeed recognized, even if there were still problems with the implementation of certain aspects of the Convention.

57. He took the opportunity to cite other paragraphs of the report that suggested implicit recognition of indigenous groups, and described measures taken for their protection and representation in various governmental bodies. He suggested that the next report should present the available material and data in a comprehensive manner that would describe the situation as accurately as possible.

58. Mr. KJAERUM asked whether the NGO community had been consulted in the preparation of the report submitted by the Government. In any event, he took the opportunity to praise the NGOs for their excellent and highly professional parallel report.

59. He noted that the State party's report had not referred to the commendable work being carried out by the human rights procurator with respect to racial discrimination in El Salvador, and hoped that the delegation would include information on that official's activities in its oral responses.

60. According to paragraph 162 of the NGO report, in 2005, the human rights procurator had planned to investigate the alleged mistreatment of migrant workers. He asked whether such a study had actually been conducted and what the results had been.

61. Ms. JANUARY-BARDILL said the mention of biological diversity and indigenous profiles in the oral presentation underscored the confusion surrounding the recognition of differences. A stigma seemed to be attached to "being different", and differences between people did not seem to be regarded as positive attributes. She encouraged the delegation to reflect on how it could in future present information in such a way that the Committee would have a better grasp of the value placed on diversity in Salvadoran society.

62. She was also interested in having more information on the implementation of legislation relating to labour and employment, and on special measures that provided access for members of vulnerable minority groups to jobs and markets. Without disaggregated data, it would be difficult for the State party to assess progress made in that regard.

63. Mr. THORNBERRY asked whether El Salvador's support for the drafting of a declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples was consistent with its internal policy, and whether the right to self-determination, under that draft declaration, should be construed as being applicable to indigenous groups in El Salvador.

64. He also wondered how the periods of massacres and conflicts had been treated in school textbooks and history curricula, and asked what was the official interpretation of the memory of such events.

65. There was no incompatibility between respect for a provision on equality before the law, and differential treatment where such treatment was required. In fact, a failure to recognize differences could lead to unequal treatment. He therefore asked whether the concept of equality had been tested in the law, for example through interpretations of the concepts of equality and non-discrimination.

66. ILO had urged States to ratify Convention No. 169, which had replaced Convention No. 107, to which El Salvador was a party. Since even Convention No. 107 required the formulation of a coordinated and systematic policy on indigenous peoples, according to the most relevant contemporary standards in that field and regardless of a State party's reservations on the content of such a policy, the absence of a policy was not an option.

67. Mr. TANG Chengyuan observed that El Salvador had advanced towards recognition of indigenous people, and it was quite clear from the report that there were specific measures and activities established for their benefit. There was a degree of contradiction in the issue of recognition of indigenous peoples, but he believed it would be impossible to apply policies while ignoring the facts. Since it had been established that about 89 per cent of the population of El Salvador were of mixed racial heritage, the remaining proportion were clearly of indigenous origin.

68. Mr. LINDGREN ALVES suggested that, given the apparent inconsistency in the recognition of indigenous peoples, the Government of El Salvador should consider settling the issue of recognition by conducting its next census along the basis of self-identification, and should allow inhabitants to decide for themselves along which racial or ethnic lines they wished to be classified.

69. He asked whether the indigenous population of El Salvador had incurred the greatest losses during the period of civil war.

70. Mr. MELÉNDEZ (El Salvador) thanked members for their interesting comments and questions. He looked forward to providing comprehensive responses after consultation with the other members of his delegation.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.