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Chair: Ms. Abdo Rocholl

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

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

*Fifth periodic report of Trinidad and Tobago (CCPR/C/TTO/5;
CCPR/C/TTO/QPR/5)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Rampersad** (Trinidad and Tobago), presenting the fifth periodic report of Trinidad and Tobago (CCPR/C/TTO/5), said that his Government's commitment to giving all segments of society an equal voice had been reflected in the consultative approach taken to the preparation of its report, which had been informed by a transparent, inclusive dialogue. Notable progress had been made in the field of human rights, but violent crime, a judicial system with an overwhelming caseload and the prevalence of domestic and gender-based violence posed considerable challenges. Efforts to address those problems were often stymied by limited capacity and resources.
3. The Government had responded swiftly to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and Trinidad and Tobago had been one of the first countries in the world to impose travel restrictions to contain the spread of the disease and protect its citizens. In order to tackle the health consequences of the outbreak, a parallel health-care system had been established that had dealt exclusively with COVID-19 cases and related issues, and a nationwide vaccination drive had been launched. In recognition of the intermediate and long-term impact of the pandemic on livelihoods and the economy, social protection programmes rolled out by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services had been strengthened. Schools and courts had continued to operate via digital platforms.
4. Beyond the measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, government action had focused on reducing violent crime, protecting women and girls from domestic and sexual violence, developing disability services, bolstering health care, improving the education system, reducing poverty, raising living standards and combating corruption.
5. The country had seen a surge in violent crime and a proliferation of the use of illegal firearms; over 600 murders had been committed in 2022, 90 per cent of which had involved firearms. In order to address the problem, the Government was working to strengthen its legislation and institutions. The Anti-Gang Act of 2021 was specifically designed to curb the spread of gangs and violent crime and, unlike earlier anti-gang legislation, did not include a sunset clause. The Interception of Communications (Amendment) Act of 2020 provided for the interception and recording of communications in prisons and prisoner transportation vehicles and the use of those recordings as evidence in legal proceedings. In response to the rise in trafficking-related crimes, the Trafficking in Persons Act of 2011 had been strengthened, and further institutional, policy and legislative measures to combat human trafficking were under consideration. The National Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons 2021–2025 outlined a range of measures for identifying victims and witnesses. An inter-agency working group chaired by the Minister of National Security had been set up to oversee the enforcement of anti-trafficking legislation.
6. Several steps had been taken to enhance the efficiency of the judicial system. The introduction of judge-alone trials had helped ease the backlog of court cases, and a plea-bargaining system had been created under the Criminal Procedure (Plea Discussion and Plea Agreement) Act of 2017, which was being phased in with the help of training and other forms of support from international partners. The adoption of the Administration of Justice (Electronic Monitoring) (Amendment) Act in 2020 had facilitated a greater use of electronic monitoring devices. The number of judges and masters of the High Court had been increased to expedite the processing of cases, and the 12 virtual courts established during the COVID-19 pandemic had heard over 1,500 matters.
7. Ongoing training was provided to improve the quality of policing, change the culture around police interaction with the public and support efforts to forge closer alliances to improve cooperation in fighting crime.

8. Various legislative and institutional measures had been taken to address domestic and sexual violence against women and girls. The Domestic Violence Act had been amended to broaden the range of persons protected under that law, expand the definition of “domestic relationship” to include children and adults in residential institutions and define social media harassment as a form of emotional abuse. A specialized police unit had been set up to investigate and counter domestic violence. In 2021, the Child Protection Unit, the Gender-based Violence Unit and the Sexual Offences Unit had been subsumed under the umbrella of the Special Victims Department, which was henceforth responsible for investigating complaints of intimate partner and domestic violence and of neglect, abandonment or sexual and physical abuse of girls. The Special Victims Department had branches in all of the country’s 10 police divisions and conducted, among other activities, outreach and public awareness campaigns around domestic violence.

9. A national policy on persons with disabilities had been submitted to Parliament as a white paper in 2019. The Disability Affairs Unit of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and the National Coordinating Committee on Disability developed and oversaw the implementation of strategies and programmes to promote the safety and autonomy of persons with disabilities. Draft disabilities legislation was currently being prepared by the Ministry of Social Development in consultation with other ministries, civil society and persons with disabilities. The Equal Opportunity Act, the Mental Health Act and the Education Act were being reviewed to ensure their conformity with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

10. Significant progress had been made in reducing extreme poverty, and education targets had been exceeded: preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary education were now provided free of charge.

11. **Ms. Kpatcha Tchamdja** said that the election of a woman president for the second consecutive time testified to the State party’s commitment to gender equality and augured well for the protection of human rights in the future.

12. The Committee welcomed the legal and other measures taken to give effect to the recommendations made in its concluding observations concerning the State party’s combined third and fourth periodic reports ([CCPR/CO/70/TTO](#)) and especially recommendations 12, 13 and 17 of those observations. The Committee also noted, however, that the State party maintained its reservations to articles 4 (2), 10 (2 and 3), 12 (2), 14 (5 and 6), 15 (1), 21 and 26 of the Covenant despite the considerable progress made in the areas covered by those articles. Were there any plans to withdraw those reservations in the foreseeable future?

13. It would be useful to learn what the State party had done to give full effect to the Committee’s Views concerning communications Nos. 533/1993, 580/1994, 721/1996, 818/1998, 845/1998, 899/1999, 908/2000 and 928/2000.

14. She would welcome information on any developments relating to the State party’s human rights protection framework that had taken place after the submission of the report. It would also be helpful to learn of cases in which the provisions of the Covenant had been directly invoked by domestic courts. More specific information on the implementation of articles 1 to 27 of the Covenant would be appreciated as well.

15. The Committee had noted the State party’s efforts to disseminate and raise awareness of the provisions of the Covenant among the general public and government staff, including teachers, judges, lawyers, doctors and law enforcement officers. She wondered whether the provisions of the Covenant were well understood and properly applied by law enforcement officers, in particular, and how the State party raised awareness of the Covenant among people in remote locations.

16. **Ms. Donders** said that she wished to know what specific safeguards were in place to ensure that non-derogable Covenant rights were upheld in emergency situations.

17. In the light of the State party’s allusion in its report to the possibility that it might abolish the death penalty if society expressed a collective view that there was a need to change the law, which could only occur through significant public consultation, it would be useful to learn whether anything had been done to promote such public consultation and to engage in an inclusive, informed and constructive national dialogue on the matter.

18. She wished to know what measures had been taken to address the shortage of suitable prisons and immigration detention facilities in the State party in order to ensure that children were always held separately from adults in places of deprivation of liberty.

19. With respect to the State party's reservation to article 26 of the Covenant, she would like to know what steps were being taken to ensure that the provisions of the Aliens (Landholding) Act, under which landholding licences could be granted to and withheld from foreign nationals, were not applied in an arbitrary or discriminatory way. The delegation might also like to indicate what the Government's current position was on its possible re-accession to the first Optional Protocol to the Covenant and outline whether there were any particular obstacles preventing it from taking that step. The Committee would welcome further information on the specific measures being taken by the State party to establish a national human rights institution in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). Had it sought the support and advice of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in that regard?

20. She would be interested to know what measures the State party took to ensure the effectiveness of its laws and procedures for combating gender-based violence. She would welcome further information on the specific measures taken to combat violence against women, including action taken to ensure that alleged perpetrators were prosecuted and that victims received compensation. It would also be useful to receive further information on the steps taken to inform victims about their rights and the legal channels through which they could claim those rights. She wished to know whether victims had access to legal aid and whether protections against domestic violence also applied to same-sex couples. The delegation might like to comment on reports that emergency protection orders could not be granted to victims of domestic violence at the hands of a partner of the same sex. The Committee would also welcome updated disaggregated data on the number of deaths resulting from gender-based violence, the complaints received, the investigations and prosecutions pursued, the sentences imposed and the compensation received by victims or their relatives.

21. It would be useful to know whether the State party would consider passing legislation that made the prohibition of femicide more explicit. She wondered whether the two centres for victims of violence that had been scheduled to open in 2018 were now fully operational, whether they had sufficient capacity to respond to the needs of victims and their children, and what steps had been taken to make women aware of the centres' existence.

22. Lastly, she wished to know what measures had been taken to prevent violence against women, including by addressing root causes such as social and cultural customs and stereotypes that promoted tolerance of gender-based violence. It would be helpful to hear about any awareness-raising activities on gender equality and violence against women and girls that had been organized for the general public and the media. She also wondered whether gender equality was included as a subject in school curricula.

23. **Mr. Helfer** said that he would be interested to learn what derogations had been instituted by Parliament that would not have been allowed save for the State party's reservation to article 4 (2) of the Covenant and whether it would consider withdrawing or narrowing that reservation and bringing its domestic law into line with the Covenant accordingly.

24. The Committee would welcome further information on the ways in which the State party had derogated from the rights protected under articles 9, 12, 14, and 21 of the Covenant during the state of emergency in 2011 and the grounds on which it had done so. He wished to know whether the State party would commit to issuing a notice of derogation for all future states of emergency containing full information about the measures being taken and a clear explanation of the reasons for them, in accordance with the Committee's general comment No. 29 (2001). An indication as to whether the State party would consider incorporating such a requirement into national law would also be helpful. The delegation might like to explain what safeguards were already in place to ensure that the Government did not arbitrarily detain individuals or violate their right to due process during states of emergency.

25. The Committee had been made aware of recent comments by the Minister of National Security concerning the possibility of declaring a new state of emergency and had received reports that the Prime Minister had held consultations with the National Security Council on that same subject. Since the Constitution provided for the participation of neither the Minister of National Security nor the National Security Council in decisions relating to states of emergency, he would be interested to hear more about their respective powers and functions. More generally, it would be useful to hear how the process of deciding whether to declare a state of emergency had changed since 2011.

26. He would appreciate it if the delegation could explain how the broad definitions of terrorism and terrorist activities introduced pursuant to the amendment of the Anti-Terrorism Act were compatible with the Covenant. In particular, the Committee was concerned that the expansion of those definitions to include the act of travelling for the purpose of committing a terrorist act had resulted in the misclassification of non-combatants as foreign terrorist fighters. The Committee would welcome updated information concerning the State party's plans to repatriate its nationals from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq. He would be interested to hear more about the activities of Task Force Nightingale and the committee recently formed to oversee the process of repatriating nationals in collaboration with their locally based families.

27. The Committee would like to receive updated information on the investigation into the kidnapping and killing of Andrea Bharatt. He would also like to know whether there was any particular reason why so many of the investigations conducted by the Police Complaints Authority had progressed so slowly. In that regard, the delegation might like to comment on the accuracy of allegations that the Police Complaints Authority had been allocated insufficient resources and was not authorized to inspect crime scenes or collect evidence. Was the State party considering amending the Police Complaints Authority Act and Police Service Regulation No. 150 to strengthen its authority to investigate claims of serious police misconduct? He would also appreciate updated information on the Miscellaneous Provisions (Special Reserve Police and Municipal Police Complaints Authority) Bill. The Committee would welcome further information on specific measures for reducing the number of summary executions and the use of lethal force by police officers, including by abolishing the "one shot, one kill" policy. He also wished to know what specific measures were being taken to ensure that all officers who used lethal force inappropriately or disproportionately were held to account.

28. Lastly, the Committee would like to know what measures the State party had taken or was intending to take to reduce the high murder rate.

29. **Mr. Carazo** said that he wished to know whether the State party had made any progress towards extending the provisions of the Equal Opportunities Act 2000 to cover those suffering discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and whether it intended to introduce legislation mandating equal pay for work of equal value between men and women. Had any steps been taken to eliminate the disparities between the requirements that men and women had to meet in order to request a name change or file for divorce? The delegation might also like to comment on reports that persons with disabilities did not enjoy equal access to employment – in part because there were still no provisions in domestic law establishing their right to have access to buildings, transport services and information – or to education, since no provision was made for special arrangements or adapted curricula for children with disabilities. In general, he therefore wished to know what policies had been put in place or were in development to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities. Lastly, it would be helpful to know whether any progress had been made towards amending the Immigration Act of 1969, which contained entirely inappropriate language in reference to disability and prohibited persons with disabilities from immigrating to the State party.

30. **The Chair** said that she wished to know whether the State party intended to repeal the section of the Succession Act under which the terms "cohabitant" and "cohabiting partner" were defined solely as referring to a person of the opposite sex. It would be useful to hear whether any steps were being taken to allow transgender persons to legally change their gender and to provide them with gender-affirming surgery and treatment. She would also welcome further information on the specific measures that were being taken to ensure that same-sex relations between consenting adults were not subject to criminal sanctions; to

repeal the law barring homosexuals from immigrating to the State party; to include provisions on same-sex unions, homosexuality and sexual orientation in its national gender policy; to incorporate sexual orientation into legislation as a prohibited ground of discrimination; and to raise awareness among the general population of the importance of non-discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

31. It would be useful to know whether the State party intended to decriminalize the voluntary termination of pregnancy, including in cases of rape, incest or when a pregnancy was not viable. She wondered what measures were being taken to ensure that women did not have to resort to unsafe abortions that might put their lives or health at risk and what steps were being taken to prevent the stigmatization of women and girls seeking abortion. She also wished to know what measures the Government was taking to reduce the State party's high rates of teenage pregnancy and maternal mortality.

32. She would appreciate information on the number of persons sentenced to death during the reporting period and on the steps taken towards establishing an official moratorium on executions. The Committee would also welcome further information on the methods of execution used and procedural safeguards in place, including access to legal counsel.

The meeting was suspended at 4.20 p.m. and resumed at 4.55 p.m.

33. **Mr. Rampersad** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that each government ministry was responsible for raising awareness around relevant issues relating to the Covenant. The Government's commitment to the country's rural communities was demonstrated by the existence of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. The provisions of the Constitution regarding states of emergency had been designed to uphold respect for human rights.

34. **A representative of Trinidad and Tobago** said that, while neither the National Security Council nor the Prime Minister had the power to declare a state of emergency, the President acted on their advice in that regard.

35. **Mr. Rampersad** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the introduction of a de jure moratorium on the death penalty or its abolition could only be considered following public consultations, which would be feasible once the Government had gained control over violent crime. In 2022, the Privy Council had upheld the constitutionality of the mandatory death penalty for the offences of murder and treason in the case of *Chandler v. The State*. However, there had been a de facto moratorium on executions since 1999. The law had required that executions should be carried out within five years of sentencing and that, if that requirement was not fulfilled, the death sentence was automatically commuted to a life sentence. The issue of alternative sentencing and the recategorization of murder had been brought to the attention of the Attorney General.

36. **A representative of Trinidad and Tobago** said that, in the Privy Council's judgment in *Boodram v. Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago*, it had found that the automaticity of the commutation of death sentences to life sentences for persons who had spent more than five years on death row was arbitrary and potentially disproportionate. The Court of Appeal, as affirmed by the Privy Council, had therefore taken the decision to hold substitution sentencing hearings in those situations. Since that judgment, three of those hearings had taken place and, in one case, the person had been freed on the basis of time served.

37. **Mr. Rampersad** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the operation of prisons was guided by the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). The State was working to improve all detention centres in the country. The authorities had sought to transition the justice system towards a restorative model; a robust sanitation programme was in place that provided for the cleaning of the entire premises, and health care was provided on a daily basis, with many of the health protocols established during the COVID-19 pandemic still in effect. In order to promote rehabilitation and subsequent reintegration, detainees had access to technical and vocational programmes, medical and psychological treatment and family visits. The prison service had adopted a shared responsibility model based on key partnerships with non-governmental, civil society, governmental, faith-based, regional and international organizations. The use of a heliport as

a detention centre had been an interim measure made necessary by the influx of Venezuelan migrants. Under the Children's Act, minors could not be held in adult prisons.

38. His Government acknowledged the upsurge in cases of discrimination and domestic violence against women. The Violence Against Women Act had been amended in 2020 to broaden the scope of the protection it provided, taking into account the cultural context, which included the importance of the extended family and protracted visits by relatives. The legal definition of a domestic relationship had been expanded to include children and adults in residential institutions, and the legal definition of emotional abuse had been broadened to include social media harassment. An amendment to the law on sexual offences in 2021 had led to the establishment of the National Sex Offender Register and a public website managed by the Police Commission which had listed the details of 16 sex offenders upon the website's launch in March 2023. The Special Victim Department, which had a presence in all the country's police divisions, was staffed by highly trained police officers who worked to prevent and investigate domestic violence. The Police Commission had also incorporated the topic into different training modules for the Police Service. His Government had established a national domestic violence shelter in June 2020 for female victims of domestic and gender-based violence, their children and other dependants. Another shelter for female victims and their families was set to open in 2024, and provision was being made for a shelter for male victims and their dependants. Free counselling was available for victims of domestic and gender-based violence. In 2024, the Government would pilot the management of State-owned domestic violence shelters by a non-governmental organization and a revised operations and management model that would include services for perpetrators.

39. In general, abortion was not legal in Trinidad and Tobago, but it was permitted when a medical practitioner had advised that the continuation of a pregnancy would threaten the mother's life or health. Further public consultation was needed before it could be legalized, given the cultural and religious beliefs and practices prevalent in his country's society.

40. Maternal mortality rates had decreased significantly thanks to actions taken by the Ministry of Health. Evidence-based information on reproductive health issues was made available in both print and social media. The Directorate of Women's Health had drafted new policies and guidelines for maternal, children's, sexual and reproductive health. The national breastfeeding policy and clinical pregnancy guidelines were posted on the Ministry website, as was guidance for persons suffering from syphilis. Health caravans were hosted across the country to make information accessible to different communities, and annual submissions were provided to civil society organizations such as the Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago.

41. The Government was considering the possibility of converting the Equal Opportunity Commission into a national human rights institution that could be fully accredited in accordance with the Paris Principles. Reparations to victims of violations of the right to non-discrimination, including in the areas of employment, education, the provision of goods and services and accommodation, could be sought through the Equal Opportunity Commission and Equal Opportunity Tribunal.

42. The Equal Opportunity Act did not currently provide protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. The Equal Opportunity Commission and the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs had established a committee to consider possible amendments to that law. The committee had been lobbied by civil society organizations to incorporate provisions on discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

43. The Constitution provided that all citizens had the fundamental right to be protected from discrimination. The Government had adopted laws and established institutions to ensure the enjoyment of that right, including by members of the LGBTIQ community. Complaints of discrimination were investigated by the Equal Opportunity Commission and the Equal Opportunity Tribunal. The Office of the Ombudsman was authorized to investigate complaints of discrimination by public bodies and officials; such complaints could be filed by all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation.

44. The Government stood ready to seek clarification from the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, the country's highest appellate court, in order to avert constitutional

challenges to any amendments to the Sexual Offences Act that might be made following the ruling by the High Court of Justice that sections 13 and 16 of the Act, which criminalized sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex, were unconstitutional. In the event that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council decided to uphold the constitutionality of those sections, the Government would be acting *ultra vires* if it amended that law. The decriminalization of same-sex relations remained a sensitive issue in the country, and public consultations would therefore be required before the law could be amended.

45. While the Government was concerned by the increase in fatal police shootings and the number of police killed in the line of duty, it was quite possible that those trends were attributable to the increase in criminal activity in the country. The relatively small number of killings by police officers when compared to the number of encounters that officers had with individuals who posed a threat to their safety and the fact that some 30 police officers had been killed in the line of duty, indicated that officers were generally complying with the Police Service's policy on the use of force. The Government did not promote a "one shot, one kill" policy.

46. The Police Complaints Authority conducted full, fair, thorough and independent investigations into all police shootings, whether fatal or non-fatal. It examined the circumstances surrounding each shooting to establish whether the officer's use of force had been justified and proportionate. Once it had carried out its assessment, it forwarded its recommendation regarding whether or not the officer should face criminal charges to the Commissioner of Police and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

47. The policy on the use of force had been updated to include provisions on the use of non-lethal weapons, such as taser guns and pepper spray. The Government hoped that the effective use of such weapons, combined with the wearing of body cameras by police officers, would reduce the number of fatalities in police operations.

48. The Government had submitted its initial report under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in June 2021 and was currently awaiting its review. The World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization had supported a project to bring the Equal Opportunity Act, the Mental Health Act and the Education Act into line with the Convention.

49. The country had acceded to the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled on 4 October 2019, and the provisions contained in that treaty had been incorporated into the Copyright Act in 2020. The National Library and Information System Authority had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Accessible Books Consortium on the dissemination of accessible copies of books for persons with visual impairments, providing such persons with access to an extensive collection of works.

50. A revised version of the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities had been approved in 2019. The policy provided a foundation for the development of relevant laws and a comprehensive framework for guaranteeing the social inclusion and equality of persons with disabilities. A committee comprising representatives of the Government, non-governmental organizations and persons with disabilities had been established in 2020 to promote and monitor the implementation of the national policy and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services was in the process of preparing a bill on the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and had sought input from other government stakeholders. A time frame for the bill's submission to Parliament had not yet been established.

51. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services ran several programmes to promote the human rights of persons with disabilities. The National Enrichment Centre for Persons with Disabilities had been recommissioned in 2018 to run workshops for such persons and had installed special software on its computers to help persons with visual impairments improve their digital literacy.

52. In 2020, the Government had introduced a new TT\$ 100 note that included a tactile feature, similar to Braille, to ensure that persons with visual impairments were able to identify the value of the note. The Government also continued to help persons with disabilities secure

jobs in the public and private sectors. The Special Support Services Division of the Ministry of Education ensured equal access to education for children with disabilities, and several special education schools had been set up for children who were visually impaired, deaf or non-verbal. Social services for persons with disabilities continued to be provided by the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and included free bus services and disability assistance grants for both adults and children.

53. **A representative of Trinidad and Tobago** said that the Government had amended the Planning and Facilitation of Development Act of 2014 to incorporate the revised building accessibility codes to which all developers had to adhere. Those codes had been developed by the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards in cooperation with persons with disabilities and organizations representing them. Ramps, lifts and other accessibility features had since been installed in buildings. Devices emitting audio signals had been installed at traffic crossings to help persons with visual impairments.

54. **Mr. Helfer** said that he would appreciate a reply to his earlier question regarding the effects on the ground of the State party's reservation to article 4 (2) of the Covenant and whether the State party would consider withdrawing that reservation.

55. He wished to know what steps had been taken to address the challenges faced by the Police Complaints Authority, which included a lack of resources and delays in conducting investigations. The delegation might comment on the alleged extrajudicial killing of the suspects in the Andrea Bharatt case.

56. He would appreciate clarification as to why, in the event that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council decided that sections 13 and 16 of the Sexual Offences Act were constitutional, the Government felt that it would be acting *ultra vires* if it opted to amend that law. If the litigation were successful from the Government's perspective, would the Government consider introducing a new bill in Parliament? On the other hand, should the Judicial Committee decide to uphold the ruling by the High Court of Justice, he wished to know whether the State party would commit to complying with that decision.

57. **Ms. Donders** said that she would be interested to learn if the Government had any insights into the reasons for the increase in crime in the State party. She would like to know what steps had been taken to enforce laws guaranteeing the separation of children and adults in prisons and to help children file complaints in cases of non-compliance with those laws.

58. She wondered how women were informed of the existence of shelters for victims of domestic violence and how the State party ensured that non-governmental organizations providing support to such victims did so in a way that was sustainable and consistent with the Covenant. Information on any school programmes aimed at promoting gender equality would be appreciated.

59. She wished to know whether the State party would be willing to take the first steps towards organizing public consultations on the potential abolition of the death penalty.

60. **Ms. Tigroudja** said that she would be grateful for an update on the status of the whistle-blower protection bill.

61. **Mr. Carazo** said that he would be interested to hear what lessons other countries could learn from the State party's positive experience with increasing the representation of women in decision-making posts. Were any laws or regulations in place to ensure that men and women received equal pay for work of equal value?

62. **Ms. Kpatcha Tchamdja** said that she would appreciate learning of specific examples of cases in which the Covenant had been invoked by the national courts to protect the rights of vulnerable people. She wished to know what obstacles were preventing the State party from reconsidering its position on the first Optional Protocol to the Covenant.

63. **Mr. Helfer** said that he would welcome an update on the application of the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act 2018 and the 2021 amendment thereto and on the status of the women and children in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq who were seeking to be repatriated to the State party.

64. **The Chair** said that she would like to know what measures had been taken to reduce the high teenage pregnancy and maternal mortality rates in the country. She would also appreciate information on the execution methods used in the State party, on the number of persons sentenced to death during the reporting period and on any safeguards in place to guarantee the rights of individuals on death row, including their right to have access to a lawyer.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.