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Chair: Ms. Pazartzis

Contents

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

Sixth periodic report of Uruguay (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 p.m.

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

Sixth periodic report of Uruguay (continued) (CCPR/C/URY/6 and CCPR/C/URY/QPR/6)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Uruguay joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Muhumuza** said that he welcomed the adoption of laws and regulations to combat racial discrimination and promote equity but, as laws were not always effectively enforced, the Committee would appreciate statistical data on their impact on the ground.
3. **Mr. El Haiba**, noting that the National Human Rights Institution and Ombudsman's Office had been accredited by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, said that the Committee had been informed that some political parties were either opposed to the Institution's existence or were seeking to dominate its membership. He would be grateful for an update on the situation.
4. **Mr. Santos Pais** said that he would be interested to know what percentage of prosecutors and public defenders were women. The Committee would be pleased to receive statistics on prosecutions of cases involving political, sexual or other forms of violence against women and girls, the outcomes of those cases and, for those that ended in convictions, the penalties imposed. He wished to know what the current status of the National Human Rights Action Plan and the second Plan of Action for a Life Free from Gender-based Violence was, whether the State party had evaluated the implementation of those plans and, if so, whether their results had been satisfactory.
5. **Ms. Abdo Rocholl** said that she would appreciate receiving statistics on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations as measured by the Recommendations Monitoring System. She wondered whether the State party had any plans to make the public defender system genuinely independent of the judiciary. In that regard, it would be useful to have information on the budgets of the judiciary, the Attorney General's Office and the public defender system.
6. **Ms. Ache** (Uruguay) said that her Government was firmly committed to the independence of the National Human Rights Institution, which was currently in the process of appointing new members.
7. **A representative of Uruguay** said that State bodies and public corporations had not yet achieved the quota established under Act No. 19.122 of 2013 whereby people of African descent were to account for 8 per cent of new recruits. The State had recruited 642 persons of African descent in 2018, 461 in 2019, 133 in 2020 and 200 in 2021. On the other hand, the percentage of public-sector scholarships awarded to persons of African descent had comfortably exceeded the 8 per cent quota in each of the past four years. The Government was aware that it needed to perform an evaluation of the National Plan for Racial Equity and People of African Descent.
8. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the Human Rights Secretariat of the Office of the President was drawing up the country's first National Human Rights Action Plan in accordance with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The Plan, which aimed to mainstream a human rights perspective into public policies, had three thematic components: vulnerable groups and non-discrimination; access to rights; and human rights education. The Secretariat had organized meetings with strategic partners, created an institutional website and developed a tool to allow public-sector, private-sector and civil society actors to submit proposals. Consultations had been held throughout the country. It was expected that the Plan would be finalized in the first half of 2023. Subsequently, a website would be set up to allow the public to track the implementation of measures taken within the framework of the Plan.
9. **A representative of Uruguay** said that 79 per cent of public defenders were women. A public debate was currently under way regarding the possible separation of the public defender system from the judiciary. However, as the Constitution entrusted the Supreme

Court with appointing public defenders, a constitutional amendment might be necessary in order to make that option feasible. In practice, public defenders enjoyed full independence, and the judiciary did not interfere in their technical work. He could not recall an instance of a public defender being sanctioned for his or her activities.

10. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Prison System monitored the prison system on an independent basis in accordance with the Paris Principles. One of the main concerns was prison violence, especially given that prisons in Uruguay were overcrowded, which increased the pressure on staff and in some cases led to excesses.

11. On 9 October 2018, at Libertad Prison, a maximum security facility, an incident had occurred in which a prisoner had died. Prosecutors had opened an investigation which had focused on the hypothesis that the victim, Carlos Nuñez, had been killed by other inmates during an outbreak of prison violence. However, the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner had conducted its own investigation at the prison and had been informed of a different version of events, in which a guard had shot Mr. Nuñez in the back with a tear gas canister, leaving him severely wounded. Mr. Nuñez had then been beaten and dragged into a cell, before being taken to the infirmary, where he succumbed to his injuries while medical staff were attending to other patients. The Office had informed the Parliament of its findings and had publicly denounced the events. Two years later, after lengthy and complex legal proceedings, three individuals had been put on trial for homicide, failure to assist and abuse of authority.

12. As part of its monitoring work, the Office had recently created a register for recording incidents of prison violence. Reports could be entered in that register even if the prisoner did not wish to make a formal complaint. In 2021, the Office had referred 12 criminal complaints, 7 of which had concerned deaths in custody, to the Attorney General's Office. It had referred 5 complaints of police violence in prisons thus far in 2022. The Office continued to advocate for a reform of the prison system that would include more training for prison guards and other preventive measures. He believed it would be appropriate to reform the country's institutional framework, given that Uruguay did not have a ministry of justice, with a view to improving the governance of the prison system.

13. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the Plan of Action for a Life Free from Gender-based Violence had been extensively implemented. Statistics on complaints of domestic violence and sexual offences would be submitted to the Committee in writing.

14. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the Recommendations Monitoring System was currently undergoing a software upgrade that would allow the Government to clearly identify which recommendations had been acted upon. The System contained 970 recommendations received from treaty bodies and special procedures and under the universal periodic review mechanism. In response, national institutions had carried out some 979 follow-up actions – a number which exceeded that of recommendations received because some recommendations required action by more than one institution. The Government did not rule out making a request for technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

15. **Ms. Ache** (Uruguay) said that the Government had heeded the call by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for a human-rights-based response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In March 2020, following the declaration of a pandemic by the World Health Organization, the Government had declared a public health emergency, closed the country's borders and tourism sites, and prohibited large gatherings. However, it had also granted exemptions allowing Uruguayan nationals, foreign residents and persons in need of humanitarian assistance or international protection to enter the country. Indeed, at the beginning of the pandemic, as travel restrictions had been introduced around the world, the Government had launched the "Todos en Casa" (Everybody Home) operation to provide repatriation flights for Uruguayan citizens and residents abroad and foreign nationals in Uruguay. The flights had allowed approximately 2,000 citizens and residents to return home. Similarly, at a time when many ports had been closed to shipping, Uruguay had opened humanitarian corridors to allow stranded passengers to disembark and

return home. The Government was proud that it had placed human rights at the forefront of its pandemic response, in keeping with the country's humanist tradition.

16. Act No. 19.132 of December 2020 had temporarily limited the right of peaceful assembly guaranteed under article 38 of the Constitution. It was important to note that the exercise of that right had been limited rather than suspended. Furthermore, the obligations from which States parties were not permitted to derogate under article 4 (2) of the Covenant did not include the right of peaceful assembly or the right to enter the country. In any case, as the Government had decided to limit rather than suspend those rights, it did not consider that it had derogated from its obligations under the Covenant and therefore had not been required to inform the other parties to the Covenant, through the Secretary-General, of a derogation. Unlike many countries, Uruguay had not imposed compulsory, police-enforced lockdowns or quarantines at any stage of the pandemic. The Government's policy had been one of freedom with responsibility, protecting public health while minimizing the restriction of rights.

17. **Mr. Santos Pais** said that he wished to know what kind of training was being provided to judicial officials on the new Code of Criminal Procedure. He understood that, although pretrial detention was to be imposed only in exceptional circumstances under the new Code, it could be imposed to ensure the safety of the victim or of society or when there was a risk of reoffending. It would therefore appear that it was possible for judges to choose to place repeat offenders in pretrial detention even in cases involving only minor offences, thereby hindering efforts to reduce the State party's high rates of imprisonment. He would welcome an assessment of the use of pretrial detention under the new Code in comparison with non-custodial alternatives. He wondered whether judges were required to consider all applicable measures and select the least burdensome for the defendant, whether the length of pretrial detention was limited and, if so, whether compliance with those limits was judicially monitored.

18. Public policies intended to prevent violence against children appeared to suffer from a number of shortcomings. Moreover, the draft legislation on shared custody and shared responsibility for raising children seemed regressive. He therefore wished to know when a children's ombudsman would be appointed, what policies had been introduced to provide effective protection for children from violence and when services for victims would be made available across the country.

19. It had been reported that recent legislative amendments had worsened conditions of detention for adolescents. For example, the maximum length of their pretrial detention had been extended from 60 to 150 days, and conditional stays of proceedings had been abolished. They did not receive detailed information on their rights or the reasons for their detention and had limited contact with their lawyers. Penalties for adolescents who committed the most serious crimes had been doubled. Clarification would therefore be welcome on the current regulatory framework for adolescents in conflict with the law. He also wished to invite the delegation to comment on the alignment between the recent amendments and international standards on the rights of the child and the question as to whether they improved the chances for young people's reintegration into society, the workplace or the education system.

20. Information would be welcome on the status of draft legislation that would amend the Civil Code to raise the minimum age for marriage to 18 years for both sexes and on any measures for preventing early marriage. The Committee was concerned at the number of adolescents, particularly girls, living in forced or abusive de facto marriages with significantly older adults. It was reported that 15 per cent of women in the State party entered into formal or informal marriages before the age of 18 and that more than 7 per cent of adolescents aged between 15 and 18 years of age were married or cohabiting, with the figure being far higher in rural areas and small communities. He wished to know how the State party intended to address the matter and how many complaints, criminal investigations and prosecutions there had been which involved forced or servile marriages or cohabitation.

21. It was regrettable that 14 of the 26 officials convicted of abusing young people at a detention centre had been acquitted on appeal and that the charges on which the remaining 12 had been convicted had been downgraded from torture to abuse of authority. He would be interested to learn how Resolution No. 46/2018, which tightened up procedures and increased

the penalties for institutional violence, and the creation of an institutional violence mechanism had affected how such cases were addressed. It would also be useful to know whether other complaints of sexual abuse against young people had been received, what the outcome of any investigations had been and what reparations had been granted to victims.

22. The disappearance of women and adolescent girls, many of whom had been living in institutional facilities, was a cause for concern, and it was claimed that government inaction discouraged families from reporting such disappearances. He would like to know how many disappearances of women and girls had been reported, whether thorough investigations had been undertaken in those cases and what the outcomes of those investigations had been. Of the 52 adolescent victims of homicide recorded between 2015 and 2019, 14 had been involved with the juvenile justice system. Of those 14, 11 had been murdered within a year of being released from detention. He wished to know what measures had been taken to investigate the murders of all of those adolescents.

23. **Mr. Soh** said that the Committee was concerned about persistent overcrowding in the State party's prisons, which – combined with the lack of adequate health-care services, social and educational programmes, and security and specialist staff – increased the risk of violence. There had been troubling reports that at least 86 deaths had occurred in the country's prisons in 2021, 45 as a result of violence. He wished to know whether the Government had undertaken a detailed study to identify contributing factors with a view to adopting the necessary measures to address the situation. Specifically, he would welcome information on steps to implement a twofold system for regular inspections of prisons and penal services in accordance with the Nelson Mandela Rules. It would be useful to learn whether the Government's response to the pandemic had included specific provisions to protect persons deprived of liberty, particularly those in overcrowded prisons, whether there had been any outbreaks of the virus in detention facilities and, if so, how the Government had reacted.

24. The Committee had been informed that adolescents deprived of liberty spent excessive amounts of time in confinement. There had also been a significant increase in the number of women prisoners, who served sentences of almost four years, on average, even though many of them had committed non-violent crimes. The Committee would welcome information on plans to expand the use of non-custodial social and educational measures for such women.

25. He was concerned about the notable increase in criminal charges and civil lawsuits brought against journalists and media outlets and about the dissemination of defamatory speech, threats and accusations via social media and other channels, in some cases, by public authorities. In fact, between 2021 and 2022, the State party had fallen from 18th to 44th place on the World Press Freedom Index. He was also concerned about the law adopted in July 2020 under the fast-track legislative process which contained overly broad provisions and granted the police excessive discretion to declare protests illegal. He would therefore welcome information on the number of protests that had been declared illegal and dispersed by force and on the arrests, convictions and sentencing of protest organizers or participants carried out under that law. The insufficient implementation of Act No. 19.307 on Audiovisual Communications Services was an additional cause for concern, and an update on the bill intended to facilitate its implementation, together with information on the composition of the Audiovisual Communications Council, would be welcome.

26. He wished to hear the delegation's assessment of the implementation of the National Plan for Access to Justice and Legal Protection for Persons affected by Disability 2015–2020 and of the priority areas to be incorporated into the next national plan. It would also be useful to have an update on progress made towards the formulation of a bill to address legal inconsistencies between human rights instruments and national law, particularly the Constitution, the Civil Code and Act No. 17.535 on persons subject to general guardianship.

27. Persons with disabilities continued to face inequality and obstacles in the world of work, and the less than 1 per cent of recruits to public positions who had a disability fell far short of the quota of 4 per cent set out by law. There were also reports that persons with disabilities were not guaranteed the right to cast their vote by secret ballot because the systems required to assist them to do so were not always in place. Furthermore, their participation in social and public life was greatly hindered by barriers to mobility, for

example on public transport, and shortcomings in the accessibility of official information, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. He therefore wished to know what specific measures the Government had adopted during the pandemic to ensure that persons with disabilities had access to information and social services.

28. **Mr. Quezada Cabrera**, speaking via video link, said that he wished to know what action the State party had taken to investigate reports of abuse by police officers, including the 85 cases presented to Parliament by the Association of Court-Appointed Public Defenders, and whether the remedy of *amparo* was an effective and common means of lodging complaints of such abuse. He would welcome information on specific measures for aligning preparations for the entry into force of the new Code of Criminal Procedure with international standards on due process and fair trials.

29. Details of the conclusions of the Working Group for Truth and Justice regarding the investigation of crimes against humanity committed between 1968 and 1985 would be appreciated, as would clarification as to whether the crimes defined in Act No. 18.026 on cooperation with the International Criminal Court included the crimes against humanity committed during the last military dictatorship. The Committee would welcome detailed information on any investigations by the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Humanity that had led to the conviction of persons who had committed torture or other serious crimes between 1973 and 1985. He wished to know whether the pensions granted under Act No. 18.033, which provided for compensatory financial benefits for exiles and political prisoners, were on a par with the pensions granted under the general social security system and, if not, why. Lastly, he would welcome information on any comprehensive reparation measures, including financial compensation, planned for the families of victims of enforced disappearance between 1973 and 1985.

30. **Mr. El Haiba** said that the Committee would appreciate information on the effect given to the framework document on migration policy, particularly regarding how protection and humanitarian assistance were to be provided to asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons. Details would also be useful on the measures adopted to guarantee the full integration and participation in society, without discrimination, of migrants, returning Uruguayans, refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as their right to health care, housing and employment. He wished to know how the Government had responded to the draft regulatory report of the commission tasked with examining possible legal mechanisms to enable Uruguayans living abroad to vote. It would be good to have updated statistics on the number of asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons in the State party and on the efforts made to reduce the backlog of asylum applications submitted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

31. He would welcome details on the number of trained assistants supporting families with children with disabilities and the type of training that they received. He would also like to know whether that training was delivered at specialized centres. Lastly, he wished to know how the number of children living in alternative care compared with the number in institutional settings.

32. **Ms. Abdo Rocholl** said that the commission of inquiry created by the House of Representatives in 2016 to investigate possible State intelligence activities conducted by police or military personnel since 1985 that might have violated legal or constitutional regulations had reportedly obtained evidence from the so-called Castiglioni Archive of espionage, infiltration, surveillance and blackmail directed at political parties, trade unions, student and human rights organizations, legislators, military officers, managers of public companies and senior government officials. The Committee would welcome information concerning the number of unlawful acts undertaken by the police force or military personnel, the number of people or organizations that had been affected and any measures taken to prevent the perpetration of such acts in the future. Information regarding the outcome of the investigations undertaken by the First Rota Criminal Prosecution Office for Complex Financial Offences in Montevideo would also be greatly appreciated.

33. She wished to know how many families had benefited to date from the Family Project Fund and from the family allowances system established under Act No. 18.227.

34. While the Committee welcomed the National Plan for Children and Adolescents in Street Situations 2020–2030 established by the Uruguayan Institute for Children and

Adolescents, operational procedures for updating quantitative data on children in street situations in the capital city and nationwide were apparently lacking. She would like to learn about the reasons for the delay and what the time frame was for the dissemination of recent quantitative data. With regard to the eradication of child labour, she wished to know when the Institute planned to update its list of hazardous jobs and to conduct a qualitative and quantitative national survey on child labour.

The meeting was suspended at 11.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.50 a.m.

35. **A representative of Uruguay** said that summary proceedings for adolescents were only permissible, pursuant to article 72 of the Code on Children and Adolescents, if they were charged with a serious offence. The vast majority of cases did not entail a custodial sentence. A short sentence was imposed in a small number of cases, but such penalties were usually replaced with socioeducational measures. In the past, court cases could take more than three months, but as judgments were now handed down quite speedily, deprivation of liberty as a precautionary measure had been reduced. A custodial sentence of between 2 and 10 years was possible for crimes such as aggravated homicide, rape and aggravated sexual abuse, but there were very few cases in which the pre-existing 5-year limit had been exceeded. Rather than having a punitive purpose, in some cases the longer sentences were required to provide additional time to prepare the adolescent for reintegration into society. Consultations on Article 75 of Act No. 19.889, which provided for eight-hour furloughs, had been held with civil society, which had approved of its provisions.

36. **A representative of Uruguay** said that training courses on the new Code of Criminal Procedure for judges, prosecutors and public defenders had been arranged prior to its entry into force in 2017 in cooperation with the Justice Studies Center of the Americas and the Centre for Judicial Studies of Uruguay. Judges were also required to attend training courses for a specific number of hours each year. In addition, they participated in a round table on criminal law at the Centre for Judicial Studies.

37. **A representative of Uruguay** said that Act No. 19.075 had raised the minimum age of marriage to 16 years. A bill to raise the age to 18 years was currently being considered by the Senate Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs.

38. With regard to the length of time that adolescents were in confinement in juvenile detention centres, the 12 to 18 hours that 56 per cent of detainees spent in their cells included sleeping hours. According to the National Institute for the Social Inclusion of Adolescents (INISA), the time of confinement had fallen by an average of one hour during the past year. Investment in sport facilities had been doubled, and a physical education teacher had been appointed in each centre. Only 3 of the 13 juvenile detention centres were maximum security facilities. Juveniles could circulate freely in the other 10 centres.

39. **Ms. Ache** (Uruguay) said that the two bills on shared custody had been combined, and the current version was under discussion in the Parliament. Priority was given in the bill to the best interests of the child.

40. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the Ministry of the Interior took vigorous action whenever any police officer broke the law. A watchdog organization had been established in 2010 to investigate complaints concerning physical abuse committed by police officers. It had investigated 152 cases in 2019, 158 cases in 2020 and 134 cases in 2021. A report issued by the National Human Rights Institution and Office of the Ombudsperson on 7 March 2022 had identified 109 cases of abuse committed by law enforcement personnel. According to the Attorney General's Office, the cases it had investigated concerned allegations of larceny, personal injuries, drug use, abuse of authority, ill-treatment of detainees and denial of medical care. Only 17 of the 109 cases had been referred to the Public Prosecution Service because sufficient evidence to support the allegations had not been found in 92 cases.

41. A total of 14,495 persons were currently deprived of their liberty in the country's 25 detention centres. As human rights violations unfortunately continued to occur in such facilities, every effort was being made to promote respect for the dignity of detainees, to support their rehabilitation and to prevent recidivism.

42. As the rate of overcrowding was currently at 123 per cent, steps were being taken to increase the capacity of detention facilities by about 3,500 cells. The problem of overcrowding had been exacerbated by the fact that more people had been arrested as a result of effective police action to combat crime and the establishment of new offences under the Urgent Consideration Act.

43. A total of 186 persons had died while in custody in 2021, many as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and there had been 21 homicides. There had been 17 deaths and 5 homicides to date in 2022. The introduction of a comprehensive health-care system had led to a significant decline in the number of deaths from COVID-19.

44. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Prison System had begun to compile and publish annual statistics on deaths in custody in 2015. Investigations had been conducted since 2016 into the circumstances of each death.

45. Resolute institutional, political and legislative action was required to address the issue of prison overcrowding. The overcrowding rate in women's prisons stood at 143 per cent, and efforts to rehabilitate prisoners were seriously hindered when cells were shared by six to eight people. The prison population growth rate, which had been as high as 10 to 12 per cent in early 2021, had dropped later in the year to 6 per cent and was currently at around 5 per cent.

46. The Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Prison System had submitted a report to the Parliament on cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment in detention facilities. In that report it had noted that the lack of access to educational and cultural activities, comprehensive health-care services, outdoor activities and visits amounted to degrading treatment and could serve as an incitement to violence. The conclusion of the report was that the situation of 34 per cent of prisoners constituted cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, 56 per cent were not being provided with conditions conducive to rehabilitation and only 10 per cent enjoyed conditions that were supportive of their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

47. The Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner had also submitted a plan to combat recidivism that had served as a basis for a constructive dialogue with the authorities of the Ministry of the Interior and the National Rehabilitation Institute. The goal was to reform the penitentiary system by, for instance, making greater use of alternatives to detention, such as house arrest, for minor offences and providing improved health care, including for mental health issues and drug addiction. The Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of the Interior were also taking steps to facilitate post-release employment.

48. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Integrated Health-Care System and the National Rehabilitation Institute had prioritized the vaccination of prisoners, who had been among the first to be inoculated. Most prisoner visits had continued.

49. **A representative of Uruguay** said that, following the passage of several pieces of legislation on the matter and the settlement of several legal challenges, the Supreme Court of Justice had finally, in 2022, ruled that Act No. 18.831 of 27 October 2011 was constitutional and therefore fully applicable. That judgment had invalidated the statutes of limitation established by Act No. 15.848, which had thereby been repealed, with the result that offences of State terrorism committed up to March 1985 could now be prosecuted as crimes against humanity under Uruguayan law. Since 2018, the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Humanity had brought 48 prosecutions and obtained 10 convictions; the particulars of the specific cases would be sent in writing. The Castiglioni Archive was in the custody of the courts, and those files formed part of the criminal cases that were in progress. With a view to their preservation, the files were being digitized in partnership with the European Union.

50. **A representative of Uruguay** said that redress for human rights violations under the dictatorship was a matter for the Special Redress Commission, established by Act No. 18.596 of 18 September 2009. That law defined several categories of victims and the redress to which each was entitled. For example, family members of persons who had been disappeared or killed by State agents had received a sum equivalent to 500,000 indexed units of account (Base de Prestaciones y Contribuciones (BPC)), while victims who had been very seriously

injured by State agents had been granted a sum equivalent to 250,000 of those units. In 996 cases, symbolic redress had been provided in the form of a document attesting to the recipients' victim status. In 501 cases, medical redress, including psychosocial support, had been provided.

51. **Ms. Ache** (Uruguay) said that, except during the military dictatorship, free speech and freedom of the press had always been protected by the Constitution and other laws of Uruguay, where no form of censorship was permitted. The authorities condemned any effort to coerce or exert undue pressure on reporters. Persons who felt offended or harmed by press articles could take legal action, but the use of that recourse to dissuade journalists from reporting the news or expressing their opinions was unacceptable. A change in the methodology used for the indicators mentioned earlier that purportedly showed an erosion of freedom of the press had distorted the real situation in the country. According to the Global Democracy Index of *The Economist*, Uruguay had been one of the world's 18 most democratic countries for many years; also for many years, Uruguay had been the highest-ranked country in the Chapultepec Index produced by the Inter-American Press Association.

52. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the figure cited earlier for the number of street children had been misinterpreted: the children in question had spent at least one night in the overnight shelters of the Ministry of Social Development owing to, for example, situations of domestic violence. There had been no increase in the number of street children; indeed, there were no children living on the streets in Uruguay.

53. Progress in upholding the rights of persons with disabilities had included the introduction of the single disability scale in 2022 and the establishment, also in 2022, of a working group, which included members of the judiciary, tasked with putting together a decision-making support system. Under Act No. 19.790 of 2019, persons with motor disabilities were entitled to vote in another polling station if their local one did not meet the established accessibility requirements. Training courses and materials had been provided for public officials, including health-care professionals, and for civil society organizations on issues such as the sexual and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities and accessibility. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health had posted information on its website in accessible formats on ways of preventing transmission of the virus. With a view to increasing the small percentage of State jobs held by persons with disabilities, the Government had made organizational changes to the competitive examinations for those positions. Further information on those subjects would be provided in writing. Personal assistants were given training to humanize the care they delivered; in addition, several State institutions were pooling their efforts to offer specific training courses on care for dependent persons.

54. **Ms. Ache** (Uruguay) said that, regardless of their migration status, migrants enjoyed access to the justice, health-care and education systems on an equal footing with Uruguayan nationals; they also had the right to family reunification. Public institutions were required to provide migrants with information about how to regularize their presence in the country. Vaccination against COVID-19 had been offered to all individuals, regardless of migration status. The Ministry of Education and Culture provided guidance to migrants on access to education and relevant laws. According to Latinobarómetro, Uruguay was the Latin American country that was most receptive to immigrants.

55. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the Refugee Commission had recognized just five cases of statelessness. Refugees and asylum-seekers were provided with identity cards that entitled them to work and to enrol in the education and health-care systems. A relatively large number of asylum applications had not yet been processed because – since the great majority of those applications were from Cuban citizens who had entered the country for economic reasons and were therefore not eligible for refugee status – the Commission had decided to delay processing them so that the applicants would remain entitled to health care and other social benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission was in continuous contact with national bodies such as the Ministry of Housing, Land Management and Environment and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security with a view to offering all asylum-seekers and refugees lasting housing and other solutions. While the country's borders had been partially closed during the pandemic, the Refugee Commission had helped to identify and facilitate the entry into the country of persons in need of international protection.

56. **A representative of Uruguay** said that, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people, including children, living in poverty had risen by 100,000 in 2020; that figure had fallen in 2021 but had not yet returned to its pre-pandemic level. The Inspectorate General for Labour and Social Security had provided occupational health and safety training regarding child labour to companies and unions participating in over 14 wage negotiation committees. Binational panels had also been established on the border with Brazil with a view to monitoring and combating child labour in both countries.

57. **A representative of Uruguay** said that, in late 2021, the Uruguayan Institute for Children and Adolescents had approved a new social benefit intended to help children living in extreme poverty to stay with their families rather than being institutionalized; the regulations for the benefit had been drawn up and the first beneficiary families had been selected. The specialist inspectors of the Child and Adolescent Labour Inspectorate were responsible for issuing adolescent labour permits. In 2021, the number of inspections had increased by 25 per cent, and 23 per cent fewer permits had been issued; there had also been a steady decline in the number of applications despite the 15 films that were being shot in Uruguay during that time, for which 120 permits for children and adolescents had been granted. Around 40 reports of violations of child labour regulations per year had been filed from 2019 to 2021.

58. **Ms. Ache** (Uruguay) said that there were no restrictions on demonstrations in Uruguay, and freedom of movement was also guaranteed. The Government fully respected both the right to strike and the right to work.

59. **A representative of Uruguay** said that the State had used the fast-track legislative procedure to ban the takeover of workplaces in order to guarantee the rights of workers wanting to work, workers wanting to protest and business owners wanting to access their company premises. Although the rights to strike and to demonstrate were guaranteed, picketing that prevented the free movement of persons in public spaces was unlawful. The Ministry of the Interior was in regular contact with the country's trade unions, and all demonstrations in the 18 months since the present Administration had assumed office had been peaceful.

60. **Ms. Abdo Rocholl** said that she was surprised at the apparent contradiction between the assertion that there were no children living on the streets in Uruguay and the reference in the report to a national plan for the provision of assistance to children and adolescents in street situations. Written clarification of that discrepancy would be useful.

61. **Ms. Ache** (Uruguay), thanking the Committee for its comments, said that she wished to highlight the important contributions of civil society organizations, in particular those of her own country, to enhancing the protection of human rights and to improving people's quality of life. The Government was firmly committed to the principles of equality and non-discrimination and was determined to keep working to guarantee the human rights of all residents of Uruguay. The delegation had taken note of the Committee's questions and recommendations and would endeavour to submit any outstanding replies within 48 hours.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.