



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/6/SR.14
26 October 2007

Original: ENGLISH

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 24 September 2007, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. COSTEA (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS THAT REQUIRE THE COUNCIL'S ATTENTION
(agenda item 4)

Follow-up to Council resolution OM/1/3

1. The PRESIDENT said that, at its fifth session, the Council had requested the group of experts mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 4/8 to ensure the effective follow-up and implementation of existing resolutions and recommendations on Darfur, to continue its work for six months and submit an update at the current session.
2. Mr. KÄLIN (Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons), introducing the interim report on the situation of human rights in Darfur (A/HRC/6/7), said that the group of experts had cooperated and worked in a transparent manner with the Government of the Sudan and other relevant partners in the international community, endeavoured to identify obstacles to the implementation of previous recommendations, and differentiated short- from medium-term recommendations with a view to assisting the Government of the Sudan to implement fully the recommendations identified in the annex to the first report (A/HRC/5/6).
3. On 24 July 2007, the group had received from the Government of the Sudan a document on its plan of action to implement the group's short-term (July-September 2007) recommendations. The plan (A/HRC/6/7, annex I) listed a series of activities, including workshops and training seminars, and identified the Government's financial needs for their implementation. On 21 August 2007, a progress report on the implementation of the short-term recommendations had been received from the Government (A/HRC/6/7, annex II).
4. The group of experts had met in Geneva from 17 to 19 September 2007 to review the status of implementation of the group's recommendations. On 18 September, it had held constructive in-depth discussions with a high-level inter-ministerial delegation and representatives from the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to discuss progress made, obstacles encountered, and areas that required the Government's urgent attention. On 19 September, the group had taken account of the Government's update and reflected on measures that the Government could adopt in order to ensure full implementation of the recommendations. The group had also met with the Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, who had been appointed focal point for liaison with the group. The group had also contacted the Chairman of the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation.
5. The group appreciated the excellent cooperation of the Government of the Sudan during the period under review, as well as its efforts to address the group's recommendations, report back to the group in a timely fashion and engage in an open and constructive dialogue through its high-level inter-ministerial delegation and representatives from the Permanent Mission of the Sudan in Geneva.
6. In its meetings, the group continued to focus on the protection of civilians, including internally displaced persons, women, children and human rights defenders, the issue of

humanitarian access, accountability and justice and the monitoring of implementation of recommendations in their totality. Information had been received from the Government of the Sudan and other relevant sources, including the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) and other United Nations bodies, the human rights mechanisms of the African Union, and the Chairman of the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Cooperation. However, the group was not in a position to provide the Council with a detailed and objective assessment of the current status of implementation of the recommendations or the impact of their implementation on the human rights situation on the ground. First steps had been taken towards implementing some recommendations while others remained unimplemented.

7. The group's final report, which would be submitted in December 2007, would provide the Council with a comprehensive description and analysis of the status of implementation. The group wished to give the Government of the Sudan as much time as possible to implement the recommendations and report back on their impact. The group also wished to obtain as much detailed information as possible from all relevant sources in order to gain an accurate picture of the situation on the ground.

8. The Council should urge the Government of the Sudan to intensify its efforts to implement the recommendations. It should also address the question of impunity and ensure that all alleged violations of human rights and international humanitarian law were duly investigated and the perpetrators promptly brought to justice. The Council should call on all parties to the conflict to end all acts of violence against civilians, particularly women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons and humanitarian workers. It should invite relevant United Nations bodies and agencies to provide the Sudan with support and technical assistance, in accordance with assessed needs, for the implementation of the group's recommendations, and call on donors to provide funds to that end.

9. Mr. MOHAMED KHEIR (Observer for the Sudan) thanked the group of experts for its constructive report, the useful dialogue with his Government and the group's interest in providing assistance. The Sudan was committed to implementing Council resolution 4/8.

10. In a short period of time, his Government had made considerable progress. The Ministry of Interior had issued orders to facilitate the work of international observers and allow access to detainees. The Council of Ministers had adopted the Armed Forces Act, which included a chapter on the principles of human rights and international humanitarian law. The Director-General of the National Security and Intelligence Service had ordered the implementation of safeguards concerning the treatment of detainees, and had prohibited unlawful detention. On 18 September 2007, the Minister of Justice had issued the Declaration to Combat Violence against Women in Darfur.

11. The Government of the Sudan had not received the assistance that it had requested for the implementation of the recommendations of the group of experts, and the focal point had been appointed only recently. His delegation appreciated the group's emphasis on the need to provide assistance in two of the recommendations contained in its updated report. He thanked the Secretary-General of the United Nations for directing the United Nations Development Programme in Khartoum to finance seven workshops on human rights awareness. He called on the Council and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to give urgent attention to providing the Government of the Sudan with the necessary assistance.

12. Mr. GAMALELDIN (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, welcomed the establishment of the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which would begin operating in Darfur in early 2008, as well as the voluntary return of some 360,000 internally displaced persons and refugees. Those developments and the marked improvement in the situation on the ground demonstrated the commitment of the Government of the Sudan to abide by its international obligations.

13. The Council's December session was the right time for a detailed examination of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Sudan within the context of the Council's review, rationalization and improvement of all thematic and country mandates. Arguments in favour of abolishing that mandate included the high level of cooperation from the Government of the Sudan, positive developments on the ground in all parts of the Sudan, the fact that Darfur was a localized problem for which the experts group was the most appropriate mechanism, and the fact that the Sudan would be subject to the universal periodic review. The Group of African States had therefore tabled a procedural draft decision whereby the Council would defer the decision on the review of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur to the second part of the sixth session.

14. The Group of African States expressed its solidarity with the Government and people of the Sudan and emphasized the need to strengthen the current positive momentum, in particular the tripartite partnership between the United Nations, the African Union and the Sudan. The Council should continue its current constructive and objective approach and respect the Sudan's sovereignty and its legitimate right to receive assistance from the international community. The Council should compel the rebel movements to renounce violence and join the peace process.

15. Mr. XAVIER ESTEVES (Observer for Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the group of experts had demonstrated that the Council's mechanisms could be effective and action-oriented. The European Union was concerned that some of the group's short-term recommendations had not been addressed. The Government of Sudan should implement all the recommendations in order to improve the extremely challenging human rights situation in Darfur. In particular, it should address the question of impunity and bring perpetrators to justice. All parties to the conflict should put an end to all human rights violations and acts of violence, particularly violence against women and girls. The European Union was providing technical assistance and humanitarian aid to Darfur and called on all stakeholders to continue contributing to the relief and support of the victims.

16. The European Union was concerned that the group of experts had not received all the necessary information from the various actors on the ground. He called on the United Nations agencies and missions in the Sudan to provide timely information to the group regarding the degree of implementation of the recommendations and their impact on the human rights situation. Since the report to be submitted in December would address the short-term recommendations only, the Council would have to decide how to continue to follow up on the implementation of the remaining recommendations. The implementation of all recommendations was fundamental to addressing the tragic situation in Darfur. He urged the Government of the Sudan to continue to cooperate with the Council's mechanisms and to intensify its efforts to improve the situation in Darfur.

17. Mr. VON KAUFMANN (Canada) expressed concern at violations of human rights, including sexual and gender-based violence, and of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict in Darfur. Protection of civilians, including safe and full humanitarian access, continued to be undermined, and the Government and rebel forces in Darfur continued to act with impunity. Children were targeted and had endured deplorable violations.

18. While his delegation welcomed the Sudanese Government's spirit of cooperation, it was appalled at the Government's recent decision to appoint an individual who had been indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur as co-chair of a national committee to investigate human rights violations in the Sudan. That move cast doubt on the Government's real commitment to improving the human rights situation. He called on the Government of the Sudan to cooperate with the International Criminal Court, and to implement the recommendations of the group of experts.

19. Mr. CHANG Dong-hee (Republic of Korea) said that establishing an effective ceasefire monitoring mechanism was a key measure for improving the situation of the civilian population in Darfur. It was heartening to see that Sudanese refugees and displaced persons were returning to southern Sudan in larger numbers than ever. However, his delegation was worried about the situation of women and children, who faced serious sexual and gender-based violations. The Government of the Sudan should end impunity for crimes committed in Darfur and should intensify its cooperation with the group of experts and the Council. The Council should continue to monitor the situation in Darfur and take the necessary action.

20. Mr. TIERNEY (Observer for Ireland) said that Ireland remained deeply concerned about the human rights situation in the Sudan, particularly in the Darfur region. There had been shocking reports of attacks on civilians, killings and the use of rape and gender-based violence as a tool of intimidation. All parties must end such attacks. The Government of the Sudan bore the primary responsibility for ensuring the safety of Sudanese citizens; it should ensure full respect for the rule of law and the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Sudanese people and should end the culture of impunity that existed in Darfur. Ireland regretted the Sudanese Government's decision to appoint Ahmed Mohammed Haroun as co-chair of a government human rights committee, since Mr. Haroun was wanted by the International Criminal Court in connection with war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. He urged the Sudan to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court.

21. He welcomed the Sudanese Government's cooperation with UNAMID, which should bring tangible improvements in protecting civilians and ensuring humanitarian aid deliveries. UNAMID should also create a breathing space that would allow the foundations of a lasting peace to be laid through the political process. Ireland strongly supported all efforts to monitor and improve the situation in Darfur.

22. Mr. HEINES (Observer for Norway) said that Norway remained deeply concerned at the human rights situation in the Sudan, particularly in Darfur. The humanitarian situation was deteriorating, and the efforts of humanitarian organizations to assist the civilian population were being impeded. The Government of the Sudan must intensify its efforts to protect the lives of its citizens, and all parties to the conflict must ensure that humanitarian assistance reached all those in need in Darfur. His delegation was worried about the impact of the situation in Darfur on the

peace process in the Sudan, and stressed that the human rights situation in other parts of the country, including southern Sudan, should not be ignored. The Council should continue to devote attention to the human rights situation in the Sudan, particularly Darfur.

23. Mr. BESSEDIK (Observer for Algeria) said that only a positive attitude that took account of the complexity of the situation in Darfur could help to bring the humanitarian crisis to an end. He commended the objectivity of the interim report of the group of experts (A/HRC/6/7). The promulgation of the law ending impunity regarding the recruitment of child soldiers, the establishment of a legal committee and the authorization for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to carry out an audit of armed forces demonstrated the Sudanese Government's readiness to implement the group's recommendations. His delegation unreservedly supported the recommendation that the international community should provide appropriate technical assistance for the implementation of human rights recommendations. He expressed concern at the exaggerations and disinformation that continued to influence the consideration of the issue in the United Nations.

24. Mr. TAVARES (Indonesia) said that the unconditional agreement of the Government of the Sudan to the deployment of UNAMID was a crucial element in efforts to re-establish law and order and create conditions conducive to a ceasefire. UNAMID should be given all the necessary financial, technical and logistical support that it needed to accomplish its task, and its full capacity should be ensured in order not to compromise the Darfur Peace Agreement and to provide the best chances for a return to normality in the region. He urged all parties to fulfil their human rights obligations under international instruments and to respect the fundamental rights of the civilian population.

25. Ms. SAGAR (United Kingdom) expressed concern that the group of experts was not in a position to report on the impact of its short-term recommendations in Darfur. The group should indicate on which short-term recommendations progress towards implementation had yet to be made, and should inform the Council of the prospects for implementing those recommendations fully within a six-month period. There could be no sustained solution to the desperate human rights situation in Darfur until decisive action was taken to address the question of impunity, and she wondered what progress could be made before the group's full report in December 2007. The group should explain how the Council could work with the Government of the Sudan to address the medium- and long-term recommendations.

26. Mr. LA Yifan (China) said that positive progress had been made towards a solution to the Darfur issue since the Council's fifth session. The second international conference on Darfur had called for further efforts to conclude and implement the Darfur Peace Agreement, and the Security Council had authorized the deployment of UNAMID in the region. In the light of those positive developments, the international community should attach equal importance to interrelated issues, such as peace, stability and humanitarian assistance, and should actively support the Government of the Sudan. The Council should support the role of UNAMID and facilitate efforts to achieve a political settlement of the crisis. In the long term, the Council should help the Government to formulate a plan for developing the Darfur region, since the improvement of the economic situation of the population would remove one of the root causes of the conflict.

27. Mr. AMRAN (Malaysia) said that commendable progress had been made in the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement, and security and law and order in Darfur was gradually improving. The effective implementation of the Agreement would help to sustain the progress made to date. While the Government of the Sudan had adopted a constructive approach to promoting and protecting human rights in Darfur, it still had to overcome considerable obstacles before it could bring the conflict to an end. The international community should provide constructive assistance to the Sudan, and the Council should maintain its cooperation and dialogue with the Sudan.
28. Mr. KIMURA (Japan) expressed concern at the clashes between the Sudanese Government forces and rebel factions that had not signed the Darfur Peace Agreement, as well as tribal conflicts and militia attacks against humanitarian aid workers. He welcomed the recent visit of the Secretary-General to the Sudan and his efforts to urge the parties to the conflict to ensure an immediate end to violence and a rapid political solution.
29. Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), said that the Government of the Sudan should be supported in its efforts to restore peace in Darfur and address the needs of the people of Darfur. She commended the positive action taken by the Government of the Sudan, and welcomed the recent high-level meeting on Darfur. The Secretary-General's visit to the Sudan had helped the Government to pursue important human rights initiatives with the help of the United Nations system. She was convinced that, with genuine dialogue, the people of Darfur would be the main beneficiaries of such efforts.
30. Ms. ALAO (International Federation of Human Rights Leagues), speaking also on behalf of the Sudan Organization Against Torture, said that, in its clashes with rebel armed groups, the Government of the Sudan continued to carry out indiscriminate attacks and killings, and Janjaweed militias continued their attacks on Sudanese villages. The conflict had a considerable effect on neighbouring countries. A recent fact-finding mission in eastern Chad had revealed the need to improve the security of refugees and internally displaced persons in the region.
31. She called on the Sudan to facilitate the deployment of UNAMID without further delay, to ensure an inclusive peace process, take steps to bringing perpetrators of human rights violations to justice, cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court, implement the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Sudan and cooperate fully with the group of experts.
32. Mr. MACHON (International Commission of Jurists) said that the parties to the Darfur Peace Agreement should ensure its full implementation, and non-signatory warring parties should sign the Agreement; all parties should respect the ceasefire. Attempts by the Government of the Sudan to prevent and investigate human rights violations in Darfur through domestic mechanisms had not resulted in the punishment of perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Special Criminal Court on the Events in Darfur had also failed to deliver justice, and had not addressed the criminal responsibility of senior Sudanese officials or tried any militia leaders.
33. He urged the Government to repeal the immunities that protected military, police and other officials from prosecution for human rights violations, and condemned the amnesties and pardons that had been granted by the President of the Sudan. The Government of the Sudan

should bring existing laws into line with the Interim National Constitution and the Sudan's international obligations, and should criminalize acts amounting to international crimes. It must also overcome the judiciary's historical and structural dependence on the executive and provide full remedies to all victims. The Government of the Sudan should comply with relevant Security Council resolutions, facilitate the deployment of UNAMID in the region, and cooperate with the International Criminal Court.

34. Ms. MEAN (Femmes Africa Solidarité) said that she had just returned from a visit to refugee camps in eastern Chad. The stories of women victims of the Darfur conflict were the most inhuman and degrading that she had ever heard. The killing and raping in Chad and Darfur must stop. She recommended the deployment of a women-only police force to protect women in eastern Chad. In the months before the deployment of UNAMID, women and children would continue to face violence, and the international community should not forget its responsibility to provide protection. The Council and the Government of the Sudan should be aware that women must play a central role in the peace process.

35. Success in Darfur would be a defining moment not only for the people of the region but for Africa as a whole, and the entire world. The conflict could be solved with political will, resources, and the courage to move towards a lasting solution. She encouraged the Council to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Sudan.

36. Ms. DE RIVERO (Human Rights Watch) said that the Council should call on the Sudan to publish and enforce orders prohibiting the targeting of civilians and civilian property and indiscriminate attacks; vet all appointments to public office on human rights grounds, and to remove Ahmed Mohammed Haroun from all posts; publicize and enforce a policy of zero tolerance of violence against women; provide an up-to-date list of detainees and their places of detention and ensure confidential access to all detainees; cease any use in Darfur of aircraft or vehicles that appeared to belong to the United Nations or humanitarian organizations; issue a blanket waiver of legal immunity for war crimes and serious human rights violations; cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court and surrender suspects subject to arrest warrants; cooperate fully with the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) and the deployment of UNAMID, including issuance of expedited visas and clearance for vehicles and equipment; and issue a standing invitation to all United Nations human rights mechanisms and give such mechanisms full and unimpeded access.

37. Ms. ABDELMONIEM (Hawa Society for Women) said that reports of inquiries into the economic and social implications of human rights violations in Darfur were often biased and not fully credible. One recent report had described Sudanese men as vicious animals who violated women's rights, whereas in fact they were very protective of women and their integrity. Misleading information harmed rather than helped victims of human rights violations, and she called on the international community to exercise care when describing human rights situations.

38. Mr. KÄLIN (Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights of internally displaced persons) said that the group of experts took full responsibility for the late submission of its report (A/HRC/6/7). In reply to the representative of the United Kingdom, he said that the current situation in Darfur was clearly described in annex II of the report. In its December report, the group of experts would make suggestions to the Council regarding the next steps that should be taken.

General debate

39. Mr. XAVIER ESTEVES (Observer for Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and Georgia, said that the Council had a responsibility to address human rights violations wherever they occurred. The States members of the European Union did not consider themselves to be above criticism and were constantly seeking to improve their human rights mechanisms and promote transparency and accountability in their policies.
40. The European Union remained deeply concerned at the human rights situation in Zimbabwe and condemned the use of arbitrary arrest, torture, intimidation and violence by the police and the security forces towards Zimbabwean citizens and human rights defenders. The Government's economic policies had resulted in food insecurity and an increase in the number of Zimbabwean refugees in neighbouring countries. He hoped that the Southern African Development Community's efforts to mediate between Zimbabwe's political forces would result in free and fair elections.
41. The human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran was deteriorating, with increasing numbers of executions, including of juvenile offenders. The use of cruel and unusual punishments, the intensification of discrimination and human rights violations against minorities and religious communities and the mass arrests of human rights defenders and civil rights activists were also matters of great concern. It was regrettable that the Islamic Republic of Iran had chosen not to take part in a bilateral human rights dialogue.
42. In Sri Lanka, there had been a worrying increase in reported abuses by government forces and in serious crimes by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Karuna faction, including killings of civilians, extortion and the use of child soldiers. The European Union urged Sri Lanka to provide adequate protection for human rights defenders, humanitarian workers and journalists. It welcomed the invitation extended to the High Commissioner and two special rapporteurs by the Sri Lankan Government, and encouraged Sri Lanka to agree to the establishment of a monitoring field presence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Sri Lanka.
43. The European Union condemned the gross and systematic violations of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and in Burma/Myanmar. It was particularly worried about the recent clampdowns on peaceful demonstrations in Burma/Myanmar and urged the authorities to release detainees and political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi. It also urged the authorities of both countries to begin cooperating with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and to comply with their international obligations.
44. While the European Union continued to focus its attention on the situation in Darfur, it could not ignore the human rights violations occurring in other parts of the Sudan. The Government of the Sudan should bring to justice those responsible for such violations, particularly the recent cases of abduction, rape and sex slavery. The European Union was concerned at the appointment as co-chair of a government human rights committee of an individual indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes.

45. The European Union appealed to the Government and people of Iraq to continue their efforts to enable the various political, religious and ethnic groups to coexist peacefully. It called on the Iraqi Government and all other States and parties involved to work together to settle the conflict, put an end to human rights violations and protect civilians, including internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups.

46. The European Union reiterated its appeal to the Belarusian authorities to respect the fundamental rights of its citizens and refrain from harassing and persecuting members of the democratic opposition and other groups.

47. The European Union urged the Cuban authorities to allow visits by international human rights mechanisms.

48. Mr. REYES RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba) said that, in agreeing to place an item entitled “Human rights situations that require the Council’s attention” on the agenda, the majority of Council members had rejected the use of accusatory resolutions. If the Council was to transcend the double standards and political manipulation that had discredited the Commission on Human Rights, it must avoid blaming and shaming the countries of the South. While he did not deny the need to scrutinize the human rights situation of each country, it was unacceptable for a small number of countries to be permitted to manipulate international human rights bodies to further their illegitimate geopolitical aims.

49. Under agenda item 4, the Council should consider situations that truly required its attention owing to their impact on human rights around the world. Such situations included acts of aggression against countries of the South; attacks on civilians under the pretext of the so-called “war on terror”; the perpetuation of underdevelopment; global warming and climate change; illiteracy; hunger; and preventable disease.

50. Mr. FUJISAKI (Japan) said that his delegation noted the concrete results of the efforts of the Government of Sri Lanka to improve the human rights situation. The human rights situation in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea was a matter of concern that required the Council’s attention. The Government of Japan remained firm in its intention to normalize relations with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and to resolve outstanding issues in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration.

51. He drew the Council’s attention to the issue of leprosy. In its resolution 2005/24, the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights decided to appoint a Special Rapporteur with the task of preparing a comprehensive study on discrimination against leprosy victims and their families, and he urged the Council to allow the Special Rapporteur to follow up on those efforts.

52. Mr. GODET (Switzerland) said that indiscriminate attacks on civilians in Iraq constituted serious violations of citizens’ most basic rights and a source of instability in the region.

53. He was concerned that there had been no progress in Myanmar following the call made by the President of the Swiss Confederation at the Council’s fourth session for the International Committee of the Red Cross to be permitted to resume its work in that country.

54. His delegation was of the view that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory should be considered under agenda item 4, and not under agenda item 7.
55. He condemned the executions of humanitarian aid workers in Sri Lanka and called for those responsible to be brought to justice. Notwithstanding the Government's efforts, national mechanisms in Sri Lanka were clearly experiencing difficulty in meeting the current human rights challenges.
56. Displaced persons in refugee camps in Darfur lived in constant fear of attack from armed groups and arbitrary arrest by the security forces. Switzerland called on all parties to the conflict to observe human rights and pursue their efforts at dialogue. Switzerland was prepared to provide technical assistance to that end.
57. Mr. NOOKE (Germany) said that his delegation was concerned at recent calls made by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for a revision of universal human rights standards. Universality was the very foundation of the international human rights architecture and was the basis of the Council's work. Any attempt to weaken that concept must be firmly rejected. He called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to take immediate measures to abolish executions in law and in practice. Germany was alarmed at restrictions on the freedom of the press and freedom of opinion in the Islamic Republic of Iran and at the harassment and intimidation of journalists, human rights defenders, women's rights activists and civil rights activists. The Islamic Republic of Iran should fully respect the rights of minorities and halt any form of discrimination against them.
58. He called on the Government of Sri Lanka to address the serious shortcomings in the work of the presidential commission established to investigate alleged serious human rights violations. Sri Lanka should redouble its efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement of the internal conflict and put an end to human rights violations allegedly committed by the security forces. He urged LTTE and paramilitary groups to refrain from serious acts of violence. Civilian killings, extortions, abductions, arbitrary detention, disappearances and the recruitment of child soldiers must be stopped.
59. Mr. THORNE (United Kingdom) said that the Burmese people should have the right to express themselves freely. He urged the Burmese authorities to release without delay Aung San Suu Kyi, other opposition leaders and political prisoners.
60. He called on the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to observe the international resolutions on human rights in that country, to allow the Special Rapporteur to enter the country, and to resume the human rights dialogue with the European Union that had been suspended in 2003.
61. The humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe had steadily worsened, bringing misery to millions of ordinary citizens. The Government's economic policies had resulted in food insecurity, particularly in rural areas. Four million people had fled the country, 80 per cent of the population was unemployed and average life expectancy had fallen to just 37. The Zimbabwean regime regularly used arbitrary arrests, torture, intimidation and violence towards human rights defenders and ordinary citizens. Peaceful demonstrations and meetings held by students,

opposition and civil society leaders were regularly and brutally repressed. In 2007, the rule of law had broken down even further. The Government must remove the repressive legislation that was used to stifle freedom of expression and association.

62. He shared the High Commissioner's alarm at the increasing use of the death penalty in the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly against juvenile offenders, and the growing use of cruel and unusual punishment such as flogging and amputations.

63. The human rights situation in Belarus had deteriorated in recent months, with continued harassment and arrest of members of the democratic opposition and other groups. Political prisoners must be released, and the Belarusian authorities must take significant and irreversible steps towards granting citizens full freedom of expression, association and a fully independent press. The United Kingdom deeply regretted that the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, like that of the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Cuba, had not been renewed.

64. In Sri Lanka, all parties should respect international humanitarian and human rights law.

65. The human rights situation in Fiji since the December 2006 coup remained a source of concern. The interim Government must fulfil its commitment to restoring a functioning democracy.

66. Mr. MATTÉI (France) said that the Council should pursue its efforts to end the grave human rights violations in Darfur and ensure that those responsible for the most serious crimes were prosecuted. The Sudanese authorities should cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court and carry out its decisions. The crisis in Darfur threatened to destabilize eastern Chad and the Central African Republic. Refugee camps and displaced persons must be protected.

67. While the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was a source of grave concern, there were many other situations that merited the Council's attention. The credibility of the Council depended on its capacity to address the situation of victims of violations throughout the world.

68. The Governments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and of Myanmar must cooperate with United Nations mechanisms, particularly the special procedures. In the light of the dire situation of victims of human rights violations and of human rights defenders, it was unfortunate that all the special procedures established to monitor the situations in certain countries had not been retained by the Council.

69. He welcomed the progress that had recently been made in Haiti, where the elected Government had been able to undertake essential reforms, particularly of the judiciary; such progress was the result of close cooperation with United Nations mechanisms. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi were also examples of the usefulness of close cooperation with the United Nations. However, even when encouraging developments were observed, cooperation with the United Nations must be pursued in order to achieve full realization of human rights.

70. He encouraged all States to sign and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The universal abolition of the death penalty was a priority objective, and he encouraged States that had not yet done so to ratify the relevant international instruments.

71. Mr. CORMIER (Canada) said that, in Uzbekistan, individual liberties, political rights and freedom of expression were under continuing threat. The Government had repeatedly refused to cooperate in carrying out objective assessments of its human rights record.

72. The Islamic Republic of Iran continued to ignore its obligations under international human rights law. Judicial executions, including executions of minors, had sharply increased in 2007. Severe, officially sanctioned forms of punishment, including death by stoning and amputation, were increasingly being used. Although the Iranian Constitution guaranteed equal protection of human rights to both men and women, in practice, women were treated as second-class citizens, particularly with respect to family and property law. Peaceful demonstrations held to draw attention to such discrimination continued to be suppressed.

73. He was concerned at reports of widespread human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, such as the treatment of dissent as a political crime and the torture and inhumane treatment of prisoners. Forcibly repatriated citizens and citizens caught fleeing the country were reportedly subjected to harsh punishment. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should allow the Special Rapporteur to visit and should cooperate fully with his mandate.

74. In Burma, members of the country's democratic movement had recently been arrested. He called on the Burmese authorities to release Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners and to engage in a genuine dialogue with members of the democratic opposition.

75. The March 2006 presidential elections in Belarus had been conducted in a climate of intimidation and insecurity. The President relied on a large security force to marginalize opposition and maintain control of his administration. There was a history of politically motivated arrests and disappearances. He expressed particular concern at the continued suppression of trade unions, restrictions on freedom of religion, harassment of NGOs and criminalization of so-called "damaging" contacts with foreign States and organizations, as well as the serious restrictions and controls placed on the media and journalists. The Council must address those situations.

76. Mr. JAYATILLEKA (Sri Lanka) said that he had been struck by the expressions of concern about the situation in Sri Lanka, mainly from members of the European Union. Human rights must not be regarded as a new version of the white man's burden. A handful of rich and powerful countries in the North and West continued to "name and shame" countries in the South and East. That was not in keeping with the spirit of universality. No country or group of countries had a historic mission to defend human rights. He questioned the usefulness of the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons, which had been sent to Sri Lanka to assist the Commission of Inquiry and to act with oversight capacity in a country in the middle of a conflict. When the High Commissioner visited Sri Lanka, the authorities would discuss with her how national institutions could be strengthened. Whether or not to establish a field presence was a matter for Sri Lanka to decide. Sri Lanka would never allow the Office of the High Commissioner to become a modern equivalent of the East India Company.

77. Mr. VAN EENENNAAM (Netherlands) said that human rights defenders were indispensable: only if their views were taken into account could a country's human rights record be improved. The Netherlands conducted an open dialogue with human rights defenders and called on all countries of the world to do the same.

78. In Belarus, human rights defenders from Malady Front and other organizations were being harassed and intimidated. Viasna, a human rights organization, had been denied authorization to re-register. The Belarusian authorities must allow human rights defenders to perform their legitimate work. In Cuba, pressure on human rights defenders was being maintained, and arbitrary detention continued to be used to prevent them from doing their legitimate work. He called on the Cuban authorities to release all prisoners, some of whom had serious health problems, and give internationally recognized organizations access to its prisons. The mandates of the special procedures for Cuba and Belarus should not have been discontinued.

79. Many Sri Lankan media workers had recently been killed, abducted, physically attacked, threatened or forced into exile. To date, no one had been convicted for any of the killings. Journalists and human rights activists had indicated that they engaged in self-censorship to avoid running afoul of the authorities. Some human rights activists had received death threats and had been warned not to criticize the Government. The Netherlands called on the Government of Sri Lanka to put an end to impunity and to investigate all human rights abuses and violations.

80. In Zimbabwe, human rights activists and students routinely faced intimidation and violence by the police and other security forces. On 25 July 2007, hundreds of members of the National Constitutional Assembly and students who were conducting peaceful demonstrations had been arbitrarily detained and beaten by the police. The Government of Zimbabwe must bring an end to the harassment of persons who asserted their human rights.

81. The recently appointed co-chair of the Sudanese Human Rights Committee was suspected of war crimes, and the International Criminal Court had issued a warrant for his arrest. The Government must put an immediate end to impunity, act in accordance with the recommendations of the group of experts, and arrest and extradite the two suspected war criminals to the International Criminal Court. The Council must remain seized of the human rights situation in Darfur and continue to act on all the recommendations of the group of experts.

82. Mr. LA Yifan (China) said that millions of children were dying of curable diseases. The livelihood of poor farmers in the South had been destroyed owing to heavy agricultural subsidies in the North. Innocent lives were being lost daily in areas that were militarily and illegally occupied by foreign troops. Racially based hatred and xenophobia had risen significantly in recent years, affecting the rights of a billion Muslims. In that connection, the Council should give particular attention to the latest blasphemy and defamation of the Muslim religion under the pretext of freedom of religion and speech. Indigenous peoples' basic rights, and their very survival, had been endangered for too long. It was high time for the Council to address those human rights crises as a matter of priority.

83. Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan) said that in occupied Kashmir, extrajudicial killings, torture and arbitrary detentions were common. International human rights organizations had independently verified gross and consistent violations of human rights, including rape and disappearances in occupied Kashmir. So far, Pakistan and India had held three rounds of dialogue and were

currently holding the fourth round; the results had been mixed. The dialogue had brought about appreciable rapprochement, stimulated exchanges and successfully launched confidence-building measures. After the successful experiment with transportation links across the line of control, the two sides were now exploring ways to widen communication links and foster people-to-people contacts. India and Pakistan must seize the opportunity provided by the dialogue and a salutary international environment to continue the search for a negotiated settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir issue, with the involvement of the Kashmiris. The President of Pakistan had put forward several creative ideas for a solution, including demilitarization, self-governance and joint management.

84. Mr. GAMALELDIN (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that expressions of concern over the situation of human rights in Zimbabwe were yet another regrettable manifestation of the bad practice of “naming and shaming”, which had contributed to the demise of the Commission on Human Rights. While the people of Zimbabwe faced many challenges, the governing party and the opposition had come together to chart a new way forward for the country. Those efforts would culminate in the general elections in June 2008. The African Union had called on the international community to re-engage with the Government of Zimbabwe. Those who had imposed economic sanctions and other punishments should remove them and respect the democratic will of the Zimbabwean people to choose their own leaders without interference and harassment. A recent constitutional amendment set the groundwork for the establishment of a human rights commission in Zimbabwe. The Group of African States would not permit any attempts to derail the progress being made to restore normality in Zimbabwe. The proposed new initiatives on Zimbabwe were not warranted.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.