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SESSIONAL WORKING GROUP OF GOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 17 April 1984, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. BENDIX (Denmark)

later: Mr. MITREV (Bulgaria)

CONTENTS

Consideration of reports submitted in accordance with Council resolution 1988 (LX)
by States parties to the Covenant concerning rights covered by articles 10 to 12
(continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1988 (LX)
BY STATES PARTIES TO THE COVENANT CONCERNING RIGHTS COVERED BY ARTICLES 10 TO 12
(continued)

Report of Canada (E/1980/6/Add.32)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Pelletier (Canada) took a place at the table.
2. Mr. PELLETIER (Canada), introducing the report of Canada (E/1980/6/Add.32), observed that Canada faced a challenging task in meeting its obligations under the Covenant, all the more so because it was a federal State in which governmental responsibilities, including the responsibility for implementing treaties, were shared by the federal Government and the governments of the 10 provinces and the two northern territories. In 1975, an agreement between the federal and provincial ministers responsible for human rights had established a Committee of Officials Responsible for Human Rights that met twice yearly and had proved a valuable vehicle for close collaboration among the federal, provincial and territorial governments in implementing the Covenants and meeting other human rights obligations, including the preparation of reports under the Covenants. The 1975 agreement had recognized that provincial governments were entitled to prepare their own sections of Canada's reports under the Covenants. That explained, at least in part, why the current report was rather voluminous. Its length was also due, however, to the desire to provide as much of the information requested in the Council's guidelines as possible, and to the fact that Canada's reports to the United Nations were distributed widely within the country as a means of increasing public awareness of Canada's human rights obligations and achievements.
3. With regard to article 10 of the Covenant, Canada's laws and administrative measures did much to protect the family, mothers and children. At both the federal and provincial levels, there were laws, tax measures, welfare programmes and allowances to benefit the family. The necessary health care was guaranteed for mothers and infants under government sickness and hospital insurance, and provision was made for maternity leave and unemployment benefits for working mothers and other special services for mothers in general. There were also social services that protected children and young people specifically.
4. With regard to article 11 of the Covenant, welfare aid financed by both the provinces and the federal Government was provided to those Canadians, who despite the generally high standard of living in the country, were unable to meet their basic needs owing to unemployment and regional economic disparities. Canada also provided international assistance, largely through the Canadian International Development Agency, emphasizing food aid and projects to help the poorest countries become self-sufficient.

(Mr. Pelletier, Canada)

5. With regard to article 12 of the Covenant, all Canadians were guaranteed access to medical and hospital services through a series of interdependent provincial sickness insurance systems which were subsidized by the federal Government if they met federal standards. Environmental protection measures had also been enacted at all levels of government and special ministries and agencies had been set up to monitor the environment. Legislation on industrial hygiene and occupational safety had also been passed.

6. The 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms had done much to advance the protection of human rights in Canada. Many provincial and federal laws, such as the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, also protected individual rights. There was machinery for legal recourse to administrative tribunals, ombudsmen and the ordinary court, and non-governmental organizations played an important role, with government support, in working for the protection of individual rights and helping to set up programmes and services to ensure the enjoyment of those rights. None the less, Canada was well aware that there was still room for progress if the ideals of the Covenant were to be attained.

7. Mr. KANEKO (Japan) observed that, since he had received the voluminous report of Canada only a few days previously, his questions would necessarily be limited. He hoped that, in the future, Canada would make an effort to shorten its report.

8. Regarding the implementation of article 11 of the Covenant, he wished to know how, in a country with one of the highest standards of living in the world, there were still serious income disparities among the population and regional disparities in the standard of living and in that connection, what programmes the Department of Regional Economic Expansion mentioned on page 39 had set up specifically for the Indian population. He would also like a more detailed explanation of the equalization payments mentioned on page 40 of the report.

9. Mr. KORDS (German Democratic Republic) remarked that he would have appreciated more time to consult with his Government on the report of Canada.

10. Canada performed a valuable service in publicizing its report widely within its own country, the kind of action the Working Group had often urged.

11. It was understandable that many of its problems in implementing the Covenant arose from the fact that Canada was a federal State in which as emerged from the introduction to the report, most of the decisions were taken by the provincial governments. None the less, since it was the federal Government that had signed the Covenant, he would like further information on what federal mechanisms that Government had set up to monitor and enforce the implementation of the Covenant in all the provinces on an equal basis. Was it possible, for instance, for a province to reject individual provisions of the Covenant which had been accepted by the federal Government?

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(Mr. Kords, German Democratic Republic)

12. Regarding maternity leave for working mothers, which was guaranteed on a universal basis in article 10, paragraph 2, of the Covenant, it appeared from page 27 of the report that women employed in the public sector did not receive paid maternity leave. He wished to know why such women were denied the rights enjoyed by women in the private sector.

13. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO (Spain) observed that, under the tax exemptions discussed on page 23 of the report, the married exemption did not apply to common-law relationships. What precisely was meant by common-law relationships?

14. She wished to know whether the child-care deductions allowed under the Income Tax Act, described on page 24 of the report were intended to encourage women to work, since they appeared to be automatically available to working mothers but only under certain circumstances to fathers. Similarly, were widowers as well as widows entitled to the spouse's pension mentioned on page 29 of the report?

15. With regard to the orphans' benefits available to children of deceased contributors to the Canada Pension Plan, as described on page 32 of the report, she wished to know whether those benefits were conditional on a concomitant enrolment in social security. It was admirable that benefits similar to orphans' benefits were payable to the children of disabled contributors; to her knowledge, no such humane provision existed in any other country's legislation.

16. She had heard that Canada had done much to integrate women into the development process, particularly in the area of new technologies, and would welcome further information on that question.

17. Mr. SVIRIDOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that Canada was in the unique situation of being a country with a long history which had nevertheless adopted its first national constitution only two years previously. That development boded well for the further improvement of human rights in Canada.

18. Although it was true that Canada faced certain problems in preparing its report because of its federal structure, it was none the less surprising that only one fifth of the report provided information on federal action and the other four-fifths contained information from the provinces.

19. He wondered why, as was stated on page 11 of the report, no government at any level in Canada had as yet decided to incorporate into its legislation as such the provisions of the Covenant that fell within its jurisdiction. It was also stated that most of the rights recognized in articles 10 to 12 of the Covenant were already protected in Canada. Did that mean that not all those rights were protected and, if so, why?

20. On page 13 of the report it was stated that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms provided that the guarantees of the rights and freedoms set out in it were subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as could be demonstrably

(Mr. Sviridov, USSR)

justified in a free and democratic society. The implication of such a general qualification seemed to be that those rights were actually curtailed by the Charter. What rights were covered by the qualification "reasonable limits", were those limits constant and what was meant by the expression "demonstrably justified"?

21. Page 12 of the report cited the provisions of subsections 15 (1) and (2) of the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Subsection 15 (2) "permitted" the adoption of programmes which would help to eliminate discrimination against disadvantaged groups such as Canada's native population. The elimination of such discrimination was not an option, however, but an obligation under the Covenant, and the Canadian Charter seemed to be sidestepping that obligation. On page 13 it was stated that section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 confirmed the existing rights of Canada's aboriginal peoples. It was clear from other sections of the report, however, that prior to the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms there had been certain restrictions on aboriginal rights. Did the Charter therefore simply confirm the status quo with regard to aboriginal rights or did it provide for additional measures to remove existing restrictions and discrimination?

22. The fourth paragraph of page 13, in referring to section 6 of the Canadian Charter, showed that there was discrimination between provinces with regard to residency requirements for employment and social services. While the elimination of such discrimination was an internal matter, he wondered why it was allowed to persist in some provinces. He also wished to know what was meant by the description "socially or economically disadvantaged individuals" and to what percentage of Canada's total population that description applied.

23. The report stressed the competence of both the provincial and the federal governments to take steps to end unemployment yet no statistics were given in that connection. According to the February 1983 issue of the United Nations Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, Canada's unemployment rate had been 6.9 per cent in 1975 and 12.2 per cent in 1982. He wished to know what percentage of the population was currently unemployed and, more particularly, what the rates of unemployment were for young people, women and native groups. Finally, what steps had the Canadian Government taken to eliminate discrimination in employment?

24. With regard to the protection of the family, it was stated in the first paragraph of page 23 that 3.6 million families had received benefits on behalf of their children in 1981. He wished to know how many families there were in all in Canada. It was indicated on the same page that two thirds of Canadian families with children under 18 received all or part of the child tax credit. Why did the remaining third of Canadian families not receive that credit and did they receive any other benefits?

25. With regard to article 11 of the Covenant, it was stated on page 38 that large income disparities remained among Canada's population, as well as regional disparities in the standard of living. Why did such disparities still exist and

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(Mr. Sviridov, USSR)

what had been done to remove them? He would welcome statistics on the number of families and individuals below the poverty level in Canada and on the percentage of elderly people who could be described as poor, in order to help him evaluate Canada's implementation of article 11.

26. Section D of the federal part of the report noted that certain measures had been taken to solve Canada's serious housing problem, particularly in the country's rural and northern areas. He would like more information on the number of homeless people in Canada and on the actual steps taken to provide adequate housing. On page 64, the report referred to native reserves. What percentage of the national territory was taken up by such reserves, why did they exist and what steps had been taken to eliminate them? Their existence could create the impression that there was discrimination against Canada's native population.

27. With regard to article 12, he would welcome data on the number of mentally ill people in Canada. He had heard that mental illness was Canada's principal medical problem and that half of all hospital beds were occupied by the mentally ill.

28. Mr. MITREV (Bulgaria) commended Canada on its exhaustive report but urged the Secretariat to ensure that such voluminous reports were circulated sufficiently far in advance to enable members of the Working Group to study them in depth.

29. Canada's report raised the same conceptual difficulties for him as for other members of the Working Group. As a signatory to the Covenant, Canada was bound to implement the provisions of the Covenant and to report on such implementation. How that task was delegated internally was an internal matter. There were other federal and indeed non-federal States in which the actual implementation of economic, social and cultural and even civil and political rights was delegated to local or provincial bodies. The overall implementation of those rights none the less remained the responsibility of the central Government.

30. Page 16 of the report described the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the remedies available to individuals whose human rights had been violated. The information provided was somewhat general, however, and he would like to know what was the precise role of that Commission in enforcing individual human rights or remedying violations of the Covenant. For instance, did the Commission enforce the right to work or to decent living standards by handling individual cases of unemployment? He also wished to know whether the ombudsmen and the various non-governmental organizations mentioned by the Canadian representative in his introduction could remedy such violations.

31. Since the obligation to implement the Covenant rested with the central Government and to some extent with provincial and local governments, he wished to know how the federal Government provided remedies in cases where provincial governments failed to fulfil Canada's obligations under the Covenant. Were there more direct remedies than judicial process and could the federal Government intervene in provincial issues on humanitarian grounds?

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(Mr. Mitrev, Bulgaria)

32. With regard to maternity protection and maternity benefits, it was clear from page 27 of the report that working women must fulfil certain requirements in order to qualify for maternity benefits. Those requirements were stricter than the requirements for other benefits, yet the Supreme Court of Canada had ruled that that did not constitute discrimination. What was the basis for such a ruling and what precisely was meant by the term "insurable employment"? If a women engaged in employment which was not "insurable", did she fail to qualify for maternity benefits? It appeared from the third paragraph on page 28 that maternity benefits were payable only after a two-week waiting period and then only for a maximum of 15 weeks. Did that mean that, once the period of maternity leave ended, women were generally regarded as being unemployed and that their jobs were not held open for them if they chose to take more than 15 weeks' leave?

33. With regard to the protection of delinquent minors, it was stated on page 33 that no juvenile delinquent could be incarcerated in a place in which adults might be imprisoned, except in the case of children over 14 who had been indicted under the Criminal Code. Did that mean that children over 14 could in fact be incarcerated with adults, and was the Criminal Code more lenient towards juvenile delinquents than towards adult delinquents? Elsewhere in the report it seemed that childhood was considered to end somewhere between the ages of 16 and 18, depending on the province, yet in the case of juvenile delinquents it seemed to end at the age of 14.

34. With regard to article 11 of the Covenant, he wished to know whether there were precise statistics on how unemployment affected families' standard of living. More specifically, if a working mother or father, or both, became unemployed, what impact did that have on the family's housing and nutrition situation and other rights?

35. Section 6 on page 48 described measures to improve food consumption levels and nutrition, yet it gave no statistics on the actual federal or provincial assistance provided. Nor did it define "vulnerable groups" or indicate the percentage of the population such groups represented. While he realized that development was not an absolute guarantee of social equality, he wondered what the Canadian Government was doing to remedy a situation in which some Canadians suffered from over-consumption of foods while food supplies to vulnerable groups might be inadequate. He also wished to know whether there was actual hunger in Canada and, if so, whether there were statistics on that phenomenon and what the Government was doing to help the hungry. Finally, section 10 on page 52 entitled "Statistical and other available data on the realization of the right to adequate food" did not in fact give any statistics on food consumption, for instance food consumption by different income groups.

36. In connection with the question of the right to housing, he noted that table 6 showing the distribution of family expenditure in 1976 (p. 463 of the report) contained the corresponding percentages for shelter and household operation. The figures in question were of particular interest in the context of the statement made in the last sentence of the first paragraph on page 477 and the last sentence

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(Mr. Mitrev Bulgaria)

on page 475 of the report. It would be extremely useful to have more specific information on urban families, families renting their apartments and families in low-income brackets. Moreover, he wondered whether the phenomenon of homelessness existed in Canada and, if so, what immediate and long-term steps the Government of Canada planned to adopt in order to remedy the situation.

37. Mr. TEXIER (France) said that he supported the views expressed by various speakers regarding the length of the report under consideration. He wished to draw the attention of the Secretariat to the fact that members of the Working Group had not had enough time to read the report. Moreover, although he recognized that the Government of Canada was making a determined effort to implement the provisions of the Covenant, he felt that it ought to be possible for the Government to prepare shorter reports, in accordance with the guidelines.

38. As far as the content of the report was concerned, he would be particularly interested to hear more about the powers and status of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. He wondered, for example, whether the Commission acted as a court once a complaint had been brought before it by an individual and what the relationship was between the Commission and existing jurisdictions.

39. Mr. BEN HAMIDA (Tunisia) said that the report submitted by the Government of Canada was comprehensive and showed that a considerable effort was being made to implement the Covenant.

40. He wished to know whether any individual, including a non-national, could bring a case before the Canadian Human Rights Commission. It would be useful to have a clarification of the rights of foreigners, in the context of section 3 on page 17 of the report.

41. The CHAIRMAN, speaking as the representative of Denmark, pointed out that it had been suggested the previous year that reports should be submitted to the Working Group 12 weeks before its session. However, even though he had had little time to consider the report, he wished to commend the Government of Canada on it.

42. In connection with one of the points raised by the representative of Bulgaria, he wished to refer to the second and third paragraphs of section 6 on page 48 of the report and to stress that Canada was a large federal State which, moreover, was making a considerable volume of food aid available to developing countries.

43. With regard to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, he saw the "amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups" referred to in the third paragraph of page 12 of the report as positive discrimination, but would appreciate reassurance on that question. He would also appreciate a clarification of the fourth paragraph on the same page. He wondered, for example, whether the provinces were required to introduce the necessary legislation within a certain lapse of time.

44. Moreover, it would be useful to have further details concerning the special guarantees accorded to various categories of temporary residents, referred to in

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(The Chairman)

section 3 on page 17 of the report. He wished, in particular, to know what social benefits Canada granted to temporary residents.

45. In connection with the penultimate paragraph on page 21 of the report, he wished to know whether it was possible to obtain a divorce through administrative channels in Canada.

46. He took note of the information provided in subparagraph (c) (iii) on page 30 of the report and wondered whether there was a limit on the value of the capital property that might be transferred to the surviving spouse without tax.

47. Turning to the Juvenile Delinquents Act, and more specifically to the third paragraph on page 33 of the report, he wished to have more information on the minimum criminal age in Canada. The second half of that paragraph was not encouraging. Furthermore, in connection with subparagraph (b) (vi) on page 34 of the report, he wondered whether the age of 16 years might be more appropriate. He also wondered what was the position of minors between the ages of 16 and 18 years.

48. In connection with section 4 (a) on page 64 of the report, he wished to request further information on how the on-reserve and off-reserve housing programme had been functioning since 1980.

49. He took note of the second paragraph of section 1 on page 69 of the report, in conjunction with the information set out on page 70, and wished to suggest that it might be a question of purely statistical evidence and that small hospitals might nevertheless be preferable.

50. He regretted that he was unable to refer to the parts of the report dealing with implementation of the Covenant by individual provinces, since he had not had enough time to consider those parts in detail.

51. Mr. Pelletier (Canada) withdrew.

Report of the Netherlands (E/1980/6/Add.33)

52. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Hamer and Ms. Pieters Kwiers, (Netherlands) took a place at the table.

53. Mr. HAMER (Netherlands), introducing the report of the Netherlands, said that the Kingdom of the Netherlands consisted of two countries: the Netherlands and the Netherlands Antilles. Under the Charter of the Kingdom, which had been proclaimed on 15 December 1954, each country was responsible for ensuring basic human rights and freedoms in its own territory. Nevertheless, it was the responsibility of the Kingdom as a whole to guarantee that such rights and freedoms were implemented. In view of those constitutional considerations, Ms. Pieters Kwiers had been designated by the Government of the Netherlands Antilles to introduce Part Two of the report, which dealt with the implementation of the rights covered by articles 10-12 of the Covenant in the Netherlands Antilles.

(Mr. Hamer, Netherlands)

54. The Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands had recently been revised. The first chapter of the revised Constitution, which had been proclaimed on 17 February 1983, contained provisions concerning basic civil and political rights as well as social and economic rights. The Covenant had been one of the sources of inspiration for the elaboration of the new constitutional provisions on basic rights and freedoms. It was the task of the authorities to take specific measures to promote the welfare and well-being of the population. Those rights had been codified in order to prevent existing or future legislation in the field from being revoked. Articles 20-22 of the Constitution guaranteed the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Under article 20, it was the task of the Government to provide for the welfare of the population and ensure the proper distribution of wealth. Article 21 contained provisions designed to protect and improve the environment and article 22 dealt with health care and housing.

55. In the Netherlands there was no separate domestic legal procedure for the protection of human rights. Such rights could be invoked both in the courts and in administrative proceedings by anyone who believed that any regulation laid down by the Government infringed his basic rights.

56. Article 94 of the Constitution provided that self-executing provisions of treaties or resolutions by international institutions took precedence over all incompatible domestic regulations. The courts decided whether or not a particular provision was directly applicable. The next report would provide further information on case law in that regard.

57. The welfare policy in the Netherlands was based on the belief that all citizens should bear responsibility for their own and each other's well-being and health. The task of the central and local authorities was primarily a co-ordinating, legislative, financing and advisory one. Actual facilities were, wherever possible, in the hands of private organizations and institutions. For a number of reasons the structure of the welfare society had been subjected to a critical reappraisal. In past decades the Government had provided most of the financial support to welfare organizations. That trend was being reversed to a certain extent. Those who made use of welfare facilities were requested to contribute financially, depending on the level of their income. Experts in the field of social welfare had questioned whether social services had achieved their objectives and had reached the intended target groups. Alternative forms of social welfare, in which professionals and volunteers co-operated, were being developed. Voluntary work was being reintroduced into social welfare programmes.

58. With regard to the implementation of article 10 of the Covenant, since the submission of his country's previous report a number of developments had taken place regarding the legal requirements for entry into marriage. The Upper House of Parliament was currently considering a bill which would make 18 years the legal age for marriage for both males and females. Under current law, the marriage age was 16 for women and 18 for men. The Supreme Court of the Netherlands had ruled that the absolute right of veto contained in the Netherlands Civil Code requiring

(Mr. Hamer, Netherlands)

parental consent for marriage in the case of a minor was contrary to article 12 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which contained a provision similar to article 23 of the Covenant. That was a case in which a self-executing provision of an international treaty took precedence over incompatible domestic legislation. The Upper House of Parliament was also considering a bill designed to remove existing inequalities between spouses from Netherlands family law. The distinction between natural and illegitimate children with regard to the law of succession had been removed and a number of changes had been made in the law regulating adoption.

59. Paragraphs 65 to 88 of the report described the measures taken to meet the housing needs of all persons aged 18 years of age and over. Those measures should be seen against the background of a serious housing shortage, which to a certain extent had been brought about by the destruction caused during the Second World War. The housing shortage had been further aggravated by a number of demographic, economic and social factors which forced people to live with relatives or to continue living in sub-standard housing.

60. The sharp rise in the value of real estate during the second half of the 1970s was a further impediment to the equal distribution of housing. The Government had taken measures to ensure that optimum use was made of available facilities. Paragraphs 76 to 86 of the report provided information on the Unoccupied Dwellings Act, which ensured that no residential building remained unoccupied for an unreasonable period of time.

61. On 15 September 1983, the Government had presented a white paper on minorities, which set forth a policy designed to minimize economic and social disadvantages and eliminate discrimination in order to ensure that members of minority groups enjoyed equal rights with all other citizens. The minorities in the Netherlands consisted mainly of Moluccans, residents of Surinamese and Antillean origin, migrant workers and members of their families, gypsies and refugees. The policy on minorities was based on the belief that people belonging to those categories constituted an integral part of Netherlands society. The Government sought to provide minorities with the same opportunities as were enjoyed by the rest of society, and had recently adopted an integrated approach to improve the access of minority groups to welfare facilities. Any minority group member who believed that he had been the victim of discrimination in the field of housing could request administrative action by the municipal authorities or initiate proceedings in the civil or criminal courts. In the field of health care, specific measures were being taken to ensure the effectiveness of health policy by providing free interpreting services and information in the languages of minorities and encouraging the participation of minority representatives in the planning and allocation of health care facilities.

62. Mr. Mitrev (Bulgaria) took the Chair.

63. Ms. PIETERS KWIERS (Netherlands), introducing Part Two of the report which dealt with the Netherlands Antilles, said that the Government of the Netherlands

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(Ms. Pieters Kwiers, Netherlands)

Antilles did its utmost to improve conditions in order to promote the full enjoyment of the rights laid down in the Covenant. There was no discrimination against persons who were not of Netherlands nationality. Although the economic situation of the Netherlands Antilles was critical, the Government was doing everything possible to guarantee a reasonable standard of living for all citizens. In that regard, the protection of the family, mothers and children was very important. The Civil Code of the Netherlands Antilles included provisions on the responsibilities of spouses with regard to one another and to the well-being of their children. Although Antillean society traditionally comprised various types of family, the law was primarily concerned with the protection of families resulting from marriage. In general, married couples earned more than unmarried couples because they were regarded as having a family to support. Furthermore, they generally received a salary bonus for each child.

64. Most of the medical expenses involved in maternity care were covered by the central and island Governments since they were part of health care in general. Pre-natal and post-natal care was available to all and did not depend on marital status. Post-natal care was also provided by private institutions. Under the National Ordinance on Medical Insurance, pregnancy was equated with sickness so that all working women, regardless of their marital status, could receive free medical care and sickness benefits. Under the National Ordinance on General Widows' and Orphans' Insurance, widows and orphans could receive pensions. Financial support for the children of divorced parents was arranged through the Guardianship Council.

65. All children and young persons enjoyed the same rights without distinction. Although education was not compulsory, almost all children attended school. The figures for 1982 indicated that 90 per cent of children between the ages of 5 and 14 attended school. Free dental and medical care was provided by the island Governments. With regard to the right to an adequate standard of living, the Government recognized the right to an adequate supply of food. Each island had a Department of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fishery which ensured good food supplies. Families or individuals who were unable to meet their basic needs could receive public financial assistance.

66. The Government was endeavouring to provide adequate housing to all citizens. In view of the housing shortage, the Government took such factors as the social situation of the applicant and the physical state of his housing into consideration in allocating housing facilities. Foundations had been set up on some of the islands to alleviate the housing shortage by providing technical and material assistance. The island Governments also provided limited rental subsidies to help low-income families.

67. With regard to the right to physical and mental health, responsibility for health care was shared between the central Government, the island Governments and the private sector. The central Government was responsible for ensuring the implementation of basic health legislation and providing certain types of health care. It also administered the Social Insurance Bank, which was responsible for

(Ms. Pieters Kwiers, Netherlands)

the health care of workers in the private sector whose income was below a certain minimum level. The island Governments were responsible for the implementation of health policy and provided health care for certain sections of the population such as the lowest income groups. The poorest sections of the population could receive free medical care. In addition to the Government Psychiatric Hospital, a number of private institutions provided care to mentally and physically handicapped children.

68. Lastly, she wished to point out that the information provided in the report was based on the official census taken in 1972. Another census had been carried out in 1981 and the results published in 1982. The Working Group would be provided with new statistical data on the Netherlands Antilles in order to update the report.

69. Mr. Hamer and Ms. Pieters Kwiers (Netherlands) withdrew.

70. The CHAIRMAN announced that the delegation of Guyana had requested that the consideration of its report be postponed to a later date in the current session. The delegation of Iraq had informed him that the expert who was to introduce the two reports of Iraq would be unable to attend the current session. That delegation was requesting therefore that the consideration of its reports be postponed to the next session of the Working Group.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.