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Chair: Ms. Waterval (Rapporteur)

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Ms. Waterval, Rapporteur, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

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

Initial report of Pakistan (continued) (CCPR/C/PAK/1; CCPR/C/PAK/Q/1 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Pakistan took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Ben Achour** said that, while he acknowledged the State party's efforts to protect the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, he would appreciate an explanation of the compatibility with that right of the legal provisions currently in force that sought to regulate which persons were and were not Muslims. The Second Constitutional Amendment, for instance, stipulated that Ahmadis were not Muslims, despite the fact that they identified themselves as such. In addition, the Penal Code contained a series of provisions known as the blasphemy laws, which, inter alia, established penalties for Ahmadis who referred to themselves as Muslims.
3. Following a mission to Pakistan in 2012, the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers had concluded that the blasphemy laws served the vested interests of extremist religious groups and were not only contrary to the Constitution of Pakistan, but also to international human rights norms, in particular those relating to non-discrimination and freedom of expression, and had recommended their repeal. In that context, he (Mr. Ben Achour) wished to mention the case of Mashal Khan, a student who had been killed by a mob following allegations of blasphemy. The delegation should comment on reports that, in practice, members of religious minorities faced hostility and suffered violence; and indicate what measures had been taken to improve their situation.
4. **Mr. Iwasawa** said that he would be grateful if the delegation could respond to reports that there had been a lack of transparency and consultation in the legislative process by which the Prevention of Electronic Crime Act had been adopted. Moreover, it was unclear how the powers granted thereunder to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority were compatible with the right to freedom of expression set forth in article 19 of the Covenant. With reference to the specific provisions of that Act, he would like to know how abuses could be avoided in the absence of any judicial oversight of its implementation, how the interception and sharing of data were compatible with the right to privacy set forth in article 17 of the Covenant, and how the regulation of service providers was compatible with the right to freedom of expression.
5. **Ms. Cleveland** said that she had not received replies to a large number of her questions. She wished to recall that the purpose of the Committee's questions was to solicit, in the light of reports submitted by civil society, either information that had not been provided in writing or clarification regarding the information that had been provided. For that reason, it was unhelpful if the delegation responded to the Committee's questions by simply reading from documents that had already been made available.
6. She invited the delegation to indicate whether the State party intended to decriminalize defamation and to provide examples of cases in which the Defamation Ordinance of 2002 had been applied. Moreover, she wished to know the number of cases in which journalists or members of the media had been criminally prosecuted for defamation, the number of resulting convictions, the number of defamation cases that had been prosecuted before the anti-terrorism courts and whether any prison sentences had been imposed. It should be recalled that the Committee took the position that defamation should be decriminalized, that criminal penalties for defamation should be imposed only for the most serious crimes and that imprisonment should never be a punishment for defamation.
7. It would be instructive to learn whether the chairman of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority had the power to shut down a media outlet immediately and what procedural safeguards and oversight mechanisms were in place to ensure that it did

not exercise its powers in a manner inconsistent with the right to freedom of expression and the right of access to information.

8. While she was grateful for the information provided on the measures taken to protect journalists, human rights defenders and lawyers from terrorism, she wished to know what additional measures had been taken to guarantee their right to life and right to personal security in the context of violence perpetrated by private actors; what protective measures and measures to ensure accountability had been taken in that regard; what measures had been taken to investigate the involvement of State forces in attacks on such persons; and what measures had been taken to prosecute and punish those responsible.

9. With regard to freedom of assembly and association, she would appreciate information on the specific conditions that a planned public assembly had to meet in order to receive authorization, the number of protests for which authorization had been denied and the basis on which a denial could be challenged. Which officials granted the necessary authorizations? The State party report indicated that, under the Constitution, citizens “in the service of Pakistan” did not have the right to form or be a member of a political party (CCPR/C/PAK/1, para. 172), but that provision called for further explanation. Moreover, she wished to know how many political parties had been found by the Supreme Court to operate in a manner prejudicial to the sovereignty or integrity of Pakistan and what penalties had been imposed on members of proscribed organizations.

10. She would appreciate information on the registration of trade unions and international NGOs. In particular, she wished to know why at least 75 per cent of the workforce of a particular industry had to be members of a particular trade union before it could be registered and how many trade unions had been denied registration for falling short of that requirement. Moreover, she would be grateful for information on the policies announced in 2015 with regard to the registration of international NGOs. It would be useful in particular to know what requirements an NGO had to fulfil in order to qualify for registration, what were the consequences of failure to register, how many registrations had been cancelled, and how many applications for registration had been rejected and on what grounds.

11. **Ms. Brands Kehris** said that replies to the Committee’s questions on the legal definition of torture had not yet been received.

12. The Committee would appreciate an update on the progress made in adopting legislation establishing 18 years as the minimum legal age of marriage. In the light of the fact that the Punjab Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act of 2015 established 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for boys and 16 years as the minimum age for girls, she wished to know whether the legislation in force in other provinces and territories still included a gender-differentiated minimum age of marriage and whether there were plans to amend the legislation in force in Punjab to ensure that boys and girls were treated equally in that regard.

13. She would be grateful for specific information on how the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elimination of the Custom of *Ghag* Act of 2013 was being implemented; how its implementation was monitored; whether complaints and cases had been brought before courts on the basis of its provisions and, if they had, what their outcomes had been; and whether the Government monitored the situation on the ground. Statistics on the number of forced marriages under the custom of *ghag* and the trends observable over time would be appreciated, as would an indication of whether those statistics revealed that the legislation prohibiting such practices was having an impact. Furthermore, she would like to know what non-legislative measures had been adopted and were planned in addition to the awareness-raising activities on which information had already been provided and would appreciate specific information on the number of suicides associated with forced and child marriage, including those of girls belonging to religious and ethnic minorities. What measures had been taken at the national and provincial levels to prevent such suicides?

14. With regard to the right to take part in public affairs, it was unclear whether the Draft Elections Bill of 2017 had been adopted and, if it had, what minimum threshold had been set in the final text for the participation of women in elections. She would be grateful if the delegation could provide further information on the representation of women in

public bodies, which was currently inadequate, and indicate whether measures had been taken to improve their representation.

15. While noting the information provided on the measures taken to increase the number of members of minorities who held elected office, she wished to know whether any other special measures had been taken in that regard. In addition, the delegation should indicate whether there were mechanisms in place to monitor the representation of minorities in public bodies. Specific data on their representation in public bodies, including in law enforcement agencies and in the judiciary, would be appreciated.

16. In the light of concerns expressed in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the combined twenty-first to twenty-third periodic reports of Pakistan (CERD/C/PAK/CO/21-23), it would be helpful if the delegation could indicate whether the authorities collected data that could be used to measure the participation of ethnic and religious minorities in public affairs, including in elections, and their representation in public bodies. The delegation should also comment on reports that Roma faced difficulties in obtaining identity documents; and explain how those difficulties might affect their ability to participate in elections and in other aspects of public affairs and whether measures had been planned to improve the situation. Lastly, she would be grateful if the delegation could respond to reports that Ahmadis were required to register on a separate voting list and indicate what measures had been taken to guarantee respect for the right of Ahmadis to participate in elections.

17. **Mr. de Frouville**, echoing the comments made by Ms. Cleveland earlier, said that, since the content of the State party report was well known to the Committee, it would be useful if the delegation could provide information not contained therein.

18. Some of the delegation's responses to the questions on enforced disappearances had surprised him. The reference to voluntary disappearance was particularly disconcerting, as it did not seem to reflect the Government's laudable acknowledgement that enforced disappearances were a problem in the State party. Indeed, the Supreme Court had on many occasions even recognized the involvement of government officials in the practice. The Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances had done important work, but it was widely agreed that its resources and powers were insufficient. He wondered whether there were any plans to enhance those resources and powers. According to the information available to the Committee, no government official had been criminally convicted for enforced disappearance; information on the matter would be welcome. It would be helpful to learn about the status of the investigations into the recent disappearances mentioned by Mr. Iwasawa.

19. Although the State party had made commendable efforts to ensure birth registration, including for refugee children, the data available showed that only 30 per cent of children were registered at birth. He asked what actions were planned by the Government with a view to implementing the recommendations on birth registration made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in paragraph 29 of its concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Pakistan (CRC/C/PAK/CO/5).

20. He welcomed the State party's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Given that many provinces had adopted legislation to protect children, it would be interesting to know whether the associated devolution of powers, particularly with regard to labour and health, had entailed any coordination problems.

21. It seemed that child labour inspections were rare. He would welcome information on the measures taken to facilitate the reporting of abuses, the punishment of those responsible and the fight against the stigmatization of victims. He also wondered whether there were any plans to bring the legal working age into line with international standards.

22. The establishment of treaty implementation cells at both the provincial and federal levels was also a sign of progress. He wished to know whether such cells would be in charge of follow-up on the recommendations issued by the Committee and other treaty bodies.

23. According to credible sources, the preparation of the State party's report had not involved consultation with civil society organizations. Information on the mechanism for consultation with civil society, including details on the procedure for selecting the organizations and persons that participated, would be appreciated. Similarly, the matter of the independence of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) needed clarification; given that the Commission had not been authorized to present a report separate from that of the Government, it would appear that its mandate ran counter to the Paris Principles. Did the State party intend to remedy that situation by revising the mandate?

24. **Mr. Heyns**, expressing concern about possible misunderstandings, said that it had been mistakenly suggested that the Committee attached greater importance to the rights of the perpetrators of attacks than to those of the victims. The Committee had on many occasions laid emphasis on the protective duties of States and on the procedural and substantive safeguards provided for under the Covenant. It was therefore important to make use of the constructive dialogue process to discuss situations that might point to practices inconsistent with Covenant provisions.

25. With regard to enforced disappearances, it should be clarified that the Committee did not expect the State party to ensure accountability for every person who disappeared, as that would be an impossible undertaking. However, the Committee did expect some form of domestic accountability for those disappearances which were within the control of the State, such as that of Mohabat Shah. In the interests of making the best possible use of the limited time available, it would be helpful if answers were provided more readily so as to avoid the need to repeat the corresponding questions.

26. The case of Muhammad Iqbal, a juvenile offender awaiting possible commutation of his death sentence, had recently been brought to the Committee's attention and could usefully feed into a discussion of the issue of clemency, which he had raised at the previous meeting.

27. **Mr. Muhumuza** said that he would appreciate clarification as to whether the legal assistance which the State party provided to indigent accused persons was discretionary or guaranteed by law, regardless of whether a case was tried in a civilian court or under the court martial system.

28. Enforced disappearance was a very serious matter which could not be equated with voluntary disappearance. The Committee would have preferred more detailed information on the questions raised in that regard.

29. Blasphemy laws could be problematic, particularly in provinces where it was forbidden to proffer evidence in a case. There were several examples of violent attacks on individuals accused of blasphemy, including that of university student Mashal Khan. The delegation's comments on the matter would be appreciated.

The meeting was suspended at 4 p.m. and resumed at 4.20 p.m.

30. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan) said that the delegation was fully committed to a positive discussion with the Committee. It had re-read some of the documentation it had previously submitted because of the need to respond to questions asked more than once. However, it would try to provide further clarification of its answers in writing.

31. On the issue of eyewitness reports, it should be noted that the identification of eyewitnesses enabled the authorities to examine an allegation fully. Anonymous allegations were non-verifiable and jeopardized the principle of presumption of innocence.

32. With regard to the Committee's comments on voluntary disappearance, it was important to make clear that in the event of a person's disappearance, until the precise nature of the disappearance was determined, the authorities had to consider that one of the possible causes was a voluntary decision on the part of the individual concerned.

33. The question of trade unions had been addressed by the Pakistani delegation at the sixty-first session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, one month earlier. During that session, the delegation had indicated that the Government was conducting consultations on the implementation of labour laws. The International Labour Organization and the Pakistan Workers Federation had supported the first-ever capacity-

building workshop for trade unions in Jammu and Kashmir, focusing on freedom of association and collective bargaining. The Office of the Registrar of Trade Unions had not yet refused the registration of any unions whose membership consisted of persons employed through subcontractors. However, litigation was pending as to the status of such persons and their ability to participate in union activities. Throughout the country there were examples of provincial legislation under which the formation and registration of trade unions were not prohibited.

34. Blasphemy law was a highly contentious and misunderstood issue and the Government was mindful of its responsibility to prevent its misuse, taking any complaint of such misuse very seriously. As was indicated in the replies to the list of issues (CCPR/C/PAK/Q/1/Add.1, paras. 68-73), blasphemy law sought to prevent interreligious discord and incitement to violence; it was not discriminatory, applying to all religions and to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. There had been recent cases of religious leaders condemning discrimination and incitement to hatred against religious minorities, and there had also been examples of the courts dismissing cases based on false accusations of blasphemy. The Supreme Court had held that there was no justification for attacks on alleged blasphemers by individuals not in positions of authority. Furthermore, an independent judiciary, free media and vibrant civil society also provided effective safeguards against the misuse of blasphemy law. Statistics for the period from September 2015 to June 2016 indicated that out of 19 persons convicted in various blasphemy cases in Punjab, one had been sentenced to death and none had been sentenced to life imprisonment.

35. Responding to the questions concerning Ahmadis, he said that Ahmadis enjoyed the same rights as any other citizen of Pakistan, including the right to profess their religious beliefs without discrimination. The Ahmadi community freely published a total of thirteen different daily, weekly and monthly bulletins, magazines and newspapers.

36. Regarding the death of student Mashal Khan, who was not to the delegation's knowledge an Ahmadi, 57 of the 60 suspects had been arrested and were in custody. The weapon had been recovered and matched with the empty cartridge cases retrieved at the crime scene. There had been eight confessions in total, and nine witness statements had been taken, including one by the father of the deceased. The joint investigation team, which had completed its report and submitted the case to the courts in early June, had recommended that action be taken against the university administration for its negligence and inefficiency and that university employees be carefully screened. The team had not found any evidence to support the allegations of blasphemy against Mashal Khan.

37. **Ms. Javeri Agha** (Pakistan) said that women currently represented 40% of the trainees at the Civil Services Academy, which included trainee police officers. In addition, there were growing numbers of women attending university and in professions such as the police and fire service. She confirmed that women had been involved in the consultative process in relation to the Covenant at both the regional and the federal level. Responding to the question on international NGOs, she said that 100 such NGOs had applied for registration: 60 were currently registered and the remaining 40 were still going through the application process.

38. With regard to juvenile justice, the execution of Muhammad Iqbal had been stayed upon the intervention of the National Commission for Human Rights, although the clemency petition was still subject to review and to the discretion of the President of Pakistan. In the case of the hanging of Shafqat Hussain, all proper channels had been exhausted prior to the execution, including an investigation by the Ministry of the Interior. For the moment, access to psychiatric care for those in detention was limited. The new bill to amend the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance would provide clear mechanisms for determining an offender's age, as well as for ensuring that certain young offenders were sent to juvenile rehabilitation centres to carry out community service rather than serving a prison sentence.

39. **Mr. Qureshi** (Pakistan) said that freedom of expression was a fundamental right but one that came with responsibilities and was subject to reasonable and proportionate restrictions that were in keeping with domestic and international human rights obligations. Responding to concerns regarding the lack of transparency and consultation in the adoption

of the Prevention of Electronic Crime Act, he said that multi-stakeholder discussions had indeed taken place and a broad-based consensus had been reached. The cross-party parliamentary standing committee had held a public hearing to allow stakeholders, including representatives of the telecommunication and information technology sectors and NGOs, to voice their concerns and reservations about the bill, but had received no substantive written proposals.

40. A subcommittee had also been created to allow for further consultation with the general public, NGOs and other stakeholders. The subcommittee's report, which contained a number of amendments and other proposals put forward by those stakeholders, had been carefully reviewed by the standing committee and practically all of the proposals had been approved. A copy of the amended bill had then been made available on the website of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications.

41. The Prevention of Electronic Crime Act complemented the work of the authorities in combating terrorism and contained provisions necessary for the implementation of its National Action Plan to Combat Terrorism. The Act allowed for only targeted surveillance of digital data and contained a system of checks and balances to avoid any abuses. With regard to all offences laid down in the Act, except those relating to child pornography and cyberterrorism, court approval was required before any investigation could begin. The penalties prescribed in the Act, in the form of fines, prison sentences or both, which in the past had received criticism for being too lenient, were reasonable in the Government's view.

42. Concerning compliance with international obligations, the provisions of the Act on authorized access to information systems, and copying and transporting data were in keeping with the Convention on Cybercrime, while provisions on the glorification of an offence, as well as on offences against the dignity of a natural person, which referred solely to false information and not to fair criticism or opinions, were in keeping with the Covenant. The Act stipulated that unauthorized access to a network or private data was a criminal offence and provided a complete legal framework for the handling of personal data accessed by a service provider or investigative agency, while the Investigation for Fair Trial Act set out detailed legal requirements and procedures for sharing data with law enforcement agencies. The Government was also working on introducing specific personal data protection legislation.

43. Responding to concerns about the powers of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority — a regulatory body that performed its functions under strict judicial scrutiny — he said that the aim of the Prevention of Electronic Crime Act was to streamline the powers of the Authority and ensure that they were exercised judiciously and fairly. While the Authority had the power to block any terrorism-related propaganda or hate speech, it did not have the power to block political comments or criticism of the Government. Anyone who disagreed with the actions of the Authority could take their complaint to the courts.

44. **Ms. Saleem** (Pakistan) said that freedom of assembly was only restricted if a peaceful assembly turned violent, in which case the principles of necessity and proportionality were applied in accordance with the law. In instances where freedom of assembly had been restricted owing to the threat of terrorism, court rulings had been handed down in favour of the organizers. Furthermore, a peaceful protest had been held in front of the parliament building in Islamabad for 126 days without restrictions.

45. In response to questions concerning restrictions on political parties and NGOs, she said that no political party could be banned unless it failed to meet relevant legal requirements. There were currently more than 50 political parties in the country, an indication of how flexible those requirements were. The aim of the NGO registration policy had been to streamline and facilitate the regulation procedure and not to restrict the activities of NGOs. With the new policy, the Government was more aware of the activities of NGOs and could more easily provide facilities and ensure their safety.

46. Claims that only 30 per cent of births were registered did not reflect the reality on the ground. The National Database and Registration Authority had access to all regions, mobiles units were in place, awareness raising programmes had been launched, and births could even be registered through telecom providers' call centres. Finally, the recent national census had helped to fill in any previous gaps in data.

47. Legal provisions were in place to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including online sexual exploitation. Child protection centres had been established across the country in order to help victims of sexual abuse and provide them with legal counselling. To ensure the safety of those children, their identity was kept secret, and the media had been issued with guidelines in that regard. The recent National Commission on the Rights of the Child Act further strengthened child protection measures. Child commissioners had also been appointed at both the federal and regional levels, and a number of programmes were in place as part of the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children.

48. The Government of Pakistan had introduced a number of measures, laws and policies to end child labour. In Punjab, for instance, 9,000 inspections had been conducted in almost a year, and 800 children had received protection and rehabilitation through various programmes. A large number of industry-specific inspections had also been carried out, resulting in many children being rehabilitated. Legislation had been passed very recently to afford greater protection to street children and facilitate their rehabilitation.

49. **Ms Malik** (Pakistan) said that Pakistan had the highest proportion of women parliamentarians in South-East Asia and was ahead of 25 industrialized countries according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Those women were making laws in order to gradually change the reality on the ground, and that was an ongoing process. Many efforts were being made to facilitate the participation and development of women, including by incorporating pro-women initiatives into development plans and amending inheritance laws in certain provinces.

50. Gender and women's development were included in the Pakistan Vision 2025 plan. The Government worked in close collaboration with NGOs and local authorities to boost voter registration among women. Provinces were holding skills development workshops at least 35 per cent of whose participants were meant to be women. Day-care centres were being set up at workplaces, and support was provided to women starting businesses. The Benazir Income Support Programme, which provided cash grants to poor women, had helped several million women since its inception in 2008.

51. Regarding the enforcement of women's property rights, she said that a land records management system had been launched in 2016 to increase transparency and accountability in matters pertaining to landownership. In Punjab Province, when a married man bought a house, his wife was given 50 per cent ownership of the house. Numerous sessions had been conducted around the country to educate women about property and family laws and rights, birth registration procedures, and issues relating to early and forced marriages and to sexual harassment in the workplace.

52. The delegation had already provided information about efforts to combat discrimination against women. She wished to stress that women occupied a variety of high-level government posts, including that of Minister for Foreign Affairs. The National Commission on the Status of Women held regular campaigns to raise awareness of gender-based violence and of the need to amend laws perpetuating gender inequality and mistreatment of women. Since 2014 the Pakistan Women Media Complaint Cell had worked to promote gender sensitivity by media outlets.

53. Her Government was committed to ensuring inclusive and equitable education for all. National and provincial authorities continued to promote girls' education. To make it easier for girls to attend school, facilities had been upgraded, new schools built and efforts made to increase the number of female teachers. Numerous programmes had been implemented to ensure that girls enrolled in school and stayed there. Of nearly 19,000 scholarships awarded in each of the 2013–14 and 2014–15 school years under a programme in Punjab Province, half had gone to girls. The authorities provided free books and meals and stipends to girls' schools. The Government had contributed \$10 million to the Malala Fund, which supported education for girls, with \$7 million of the amount earmarked to help girls in remote areas.

54. Replying to a question about monitoring of efforts to protect and promote women's rights, she said that the national and provincial arms of the National Commission on the Status of Women had quasi-judicial powers. They could request information and

documentation from any source or entity, enforce requests for the presence of any person required to testify in connection with a case, inspect any place of detention with the prior permission of the relevant provincial government, and intervene in institutional procedures for redressing violations of women's rights.

55. There were ombudswomen at the federal and provincial levels. The Women Development Department and its provincial arms ensured that government policies were implemented.

56. Replying to a question about family laws, she said that the provinces had enacted various laws to limit early marriages. The Punjab Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act of 2015 had increased the penalties for violations. The Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Act of 2015 stipulated that marriages under Islamic law had to be registered with the Government, and that *nikah* (marriage) registrars had to be licensed by the Government. Penalties for entering into polygamous marriages without the permission of the existing wives had been increased. The Family Courts (Amendment) Act of 2015 included measures to speed up litigation and imposed stringent penalties for failure by fathers to pay for the maintenance of children not in their custody. Implementation of measures affecting women was monitored by the provincial arms of the National Commission on the Status of Women. For example, they were mandated to monitor cases of forced marriages of children. A hotline for complaints regarding family issues had handled more than 2,000 enquiries.

57. In short, her country was making considerable progress in protecting and promoting women's rights and was in fact a regional leader in that respect. Nevertheless, in order to be lasting and real, change had to be incremental and rooted in a democratic process. She urged the Committee to view the glass as half full rather than half empty.

58. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan) said that he would describe measures taken to address the killing and abduction of lawyers, journalists and human rights defenders. His country's robust media played an important role in protecting and promoting human rights and those who defended them. The media enjoyed an unprecedented level of freedom and drew immediate attention to all cases of harassment and intimidation of journalists, which in turn spurred the authorities to action. As had been mentioned earlier, steps to protect journalists included the establishment of a ministerial committee to oversee the safety of media outlets, a hotline, special life insurance and housing schemes for journalists, and a proposal to establish an endowment fund for journalists injured in the line of duty. A journalists' welfare and protection bill was undergoing legal review; it had already been circulated to professional organizations representing journalists for input. His delegation would provide additional information in writing on the issue, which his Government took very seriously.

59. **Ms. Cleveland** asked how the State party interpreted article 19 of its Constitution in the light of article 19 (3) of the Covenant, which strictly limited restrictions on freedom of expression.

60. Responding to a request to provide names of journalists and human rights defenders who had reported being harassed by the authorities, she said that according to Amnesty International, in January 2017 five human rights defenders had been abducted from Islamabad and parts of Punjab province; one remained missing and another had complained of having been tortured. According to the Pakistan Press Foundation, in early July 2017 Abdullah Zafar, a staff reporter for The Nation, had been abducted and held by unidentified men for nearly 20 hours before being released. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Islamabad High Court had, on 23 May 2017, ordered the Federal Investigation Agency to refrain from harassing Taha Siddiqui, the Pakistan bureau chief of World Is One News. On 25 June 2017 a journalist had been detained by armed men and later charged under the Prevention of Electronic Crime Act, reportedly for criticizing State security forces. The Committee would welcome information about measures taken to investigate those cases.

61. **Mr. de Frouville** said that, as Ms. Malik had observed, it was important to acknowledge progress even though much remained to be done. The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in its concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Pakistan (CEDAW/C/PAK/CO/4), had expressed concern about the paucity of information with respect to the human and financial resources available

to the National Commission on the Status of Women to fulfil its broad mandate. Could the delegation provide more information on those resources?

62. He had not received adequate replies to some of his earlier questions. For example, did the State party intend to withdraw its reservations to articles 3 and 25 of the Covenant? Could it provide information on the criminalization of sexual relations between consenting adult men, and on steps taken to combat discrimination against LGBTI persons? Regarding forced disappearances, were there plans to provide the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances with more resources? What entity was responsible for ensuring that perpetrators of such acts were duly punished?

63. **Ms. Brands Kehris** said that the delegation had not replied to her questions about representation of minorities or about ensuring that certain minority groups could exercise their voting rights. She hoped to receive written replies to those questions.

64. **Ms. Javeri Agha** (Pakistan) said that the delegation would provide the Committee with a booklet about the National Action Plan for Human Rights.

65. **Mr. Michael** (Pakistan) said that he wished to reiterate his Government's commitment to safeguarding the civil and political rights of all citizens of Pakistan, without any discrimination. His Government would endeavour to allocate increased resources to that end, in accordance with his country's international obligations and national priorities, it being understood that the promotion and protection of human rights would, in all countries, always remain a work in progress.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.