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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Fourteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 7 May 1996, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. ALSTON

later: Mr. CEAUSU

later: Mr. ALSTON

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS:

- (a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (agenda item 4) (continued)

Initial report of Guatemala (continued) (E/1990/5/Add.24;
E/C.12/1995/LQ.9; HRI/CORE/1/Add.47)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Arranz Sanz (Guatemala) took a place at the Committee table.

III. ISSUES RELATING TO SPECIFIC RIGHTS RECOGNIZED IN THE COVENANT
(arts. 6-15)

Article 6. Right to work (issues 11-22)

2. Mr. ALVAREZ VITA asked if the Guatemalan Government had any plan to guarantee respect for the right to work, especially in the case of day workers and those employed in export processing. It was clear from communications received that workers had practically no protection and that a number of unjustified dismissals took place. He asked what were the criteria for establishing the level of the national minimum wage, and whether there were any plans to raise it in the near future.

3. Mr. CEAUSU noted that in the written reply to question 15 of the list of issues, it was stated that checks carried out by the General Labour Inspectorate of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in 1994 had shown that minimum wages were not being paid in 50 per cent of cases, and that official inspections and special programmes had been carried out in 1995 resulting in minimum wages being paid in 65 per cent of cases. He asked about the powers of the Inspectorate, and specifically whether it could impose fines on employers who were found not to be paying minimum wages or not abiding by other provisions of labour legislation.

4. Mr. TEXIER said that although the table of main employment indicators for the period 1980-1990, contained in paragraph 20 of the report (E/1990/5/Add.24), gave an idea of the size and nature of the economically active population and of the rates of employment and unemployment, he would like more data, and in particular more recent data, on rural and urban areas, and the indigenous peoples. A more precise explanation of visible and invisible underemployment would be valuable, as would information on the share of the informal sector in the overall statistics.

5. Mr. GRISSA said he was puzzled by the figures given in the table in paragraph 20 of the report and in the reply to question 11 of the list of issues, which stated that 62 per cent of the economically active population worked in the informal sector. First of all, the table gave figures for the population "aged 10 and over"; he therefore wondered whether there was a minimum working age and, if so, what it was. The figure for unemployment in 1990 (57,958) represented only 2 per cent of the economically active population; he wondered how it was possible for a country where 62 per cent of

the economically active population worked in the informal sector to determine what constituted an unemployed person and therefore to speak of a rate of unemployment, let alone one that was so low. From the employment standpoint, Guatemala seemed to be a paradise.

6. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN said there seemed to be a contradiction between the reply to question 44 of the list of issues regarding the total number of hours of study and hours of work of child workers, which supplied copious details of Guatemalan legislation relating to child labour, and the reply to question 20 of the list of issues. The latter reply stated that child labour generally occurred in the informal sector, which was not covered by the General Labour Inspectorate, and that in the formal sector, inspection and correction programmes were carried out in order to keep child labour to a minimum. She requested clarification of the apparent discrepancy.

7. Mr. CEAUSU said, with reference to the main employment indicators set out in paragraph 20 of the report, that he would like to know how many people were employed in the various branches of the Guatemalan economy. The core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.47) contained paragraphs giving information on the country's financial activities, especially the banking sector. In reading it, he was led to wonder how many of the economically active population worked in those areas, and in general whether there was a balance in terms of employment between the various sectors of the economy.

8. Mr. RATTRAY said that the right to work had been addressed in terms of the formal and informal sectors, but the classification of the two was somewhat obscure. He had some doubt about the rationale of defining the informal sector as establishments of fewer than five persons and the formal sector as establishments of five or more persons. He would also like to know what social benefits accrued in each case.

9. Mr. AHMED said that the 1995 report of the Human Rights Procurator had criticized the Government's policy towards trade unions, minimum wages, the violation of workers' rights and the mass dismissal of workers trying to organize themselves into trade unions; the judiciary for failing to set up labour tribunals as required by the Labour Code; and traditional delays in the administration of labour justice, which had effectively prevented workers organizing themselves to protect their rights and engaging in collective bargaining. The Human Rights Procurator had appealed to the executive, legislature and judiciary to make a more consistent effort to create jobs, enhance the protection of workers, respect their right to organize and react to their demands. As the report had been published before the new Government had taken office in January 1996, he asked if it would be adopting a new approach to labour issues. Would the situation be remedied and labour rights guaranteed?

10. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said there should not be any child labour at all, even in the informal sector. The Guatemalan Government should ensure that it was kept to a minimum in both sectors of the economy, but starting with the informal sector. That was a top priority for the Committee, and the Government should face up to its responsibilities, especially with regard to abandoned children.

11. Mr. Ceausu (Vice-Chairperson) took the Chair.

Article 7. Right to just and favourable conditions of work (issues 23-26)

12. Mr. RATTRAY said, with reference to the right to work as it affected women, that it was obvious that in Guatemala there was deep-seated culturally based discrimination against women's work. It was stated in the written reply to question 23 of the list of issues that productive work by Guatemalan women must be compatible with the care of children, must to a large extent constitute an extension of domestic work, and must take place largely in the informal sector. It was stated in the reply to question 24 that the low level of participation of women in both the public and the private sectors was due not to discriminatory policies on the part of the State, but mainly to the prevailing idea in society that the division of labour on a gender basis was a "natural fact" stemming from biological differences. He asked whether, in light of those replies, the Government of Guatemala accepted that it had a duty to deal with such cultural factors in order to ensure employment for women.

13. Mrs. AHODIKEPE said that, according to a report by the United States Department of State, health and safety standards at work in Guatemala were inadequate. Other aspects of the right to work were implemented in an increasingly unsatisfactory manner. Workers in Guatemala had the legal right to refuse to work in dangerous conditions, but few risked losing their jobs by complaining, and no action was taken against those responsible for the dangerous conditions and poor standards. Inspectors were trained in labour health and safety, and many undertakings observed the regulations, but they were not enforced with sufficient vigour. She asked what the Government proposed to do to resolve the situation.

14. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN said she found offensive the statement in the reply to question 23 of the list of issues regarding the productive work of Guatemalan women, to the effect that one of the main characteristics of the incorporation of women in the labour market was that they undertook a double or triple working day, which included "reproductive work", or "the biological and social reproduction of mankind", and "domestic work to ensure the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force". It reduced women to the level of baby-making machines and used extremely discriminatory language.

15. Ms. TAYA said that statutory minimum wages were not sufficient to cover the minimum requirements of a family, and many workers were not even paid the minimum wage. She cited one case in which they were paid one eighth of the statutory minimum. Working conditions and wages were major causes of extreme poverty, and she asked what the difficulty was in increasing minimum wages and enforcing their implementation effectively. What plan of action did the Government have to improve the situation?

16. Mr. TEXIER said that he too would welcome more details regarding the minimum wage. The material in the report relating to article 7 (paras. 24 and 25) described the machinery for establishing the minimum wage, the sanctions applied for infringements of minimum wage agreements and the arrangements for supervision. He would like to know, however, how many persons actually received the minimum wage and what proportion of the employed

population they represented. What was the purchasing power of the minimum wage? Could a person receiving it provide for his own and his family's needs? Did it rise automatically with the cost of living or was it regularly revised and, if so, by what mechanism? The high proportion of the population reported to be living in poverty showed that the minimum wage was not respected, was set too low or was not reaching the majority of those working.

17. Mr. ADEKUOYE asked what machinery had been established to supervise the situation of female domestic workers in the context of the national minimum wage. What percentage of persons belonging to indigenous groups held high-level posts in the government bureaucracy and in management outside the public sector?

18. Mr. AHMED said that the minimum wage of 16 quetzales a day for commercial and industrial workers and 14.5 quetzales for farm workers was clearly not enough to provide a decent standard of living, since some 70 per cent of the population, including some 60 per cent of those in employment, were reported to be living below the poverty line. He asked what action the new Government envisaged to remedy that situation.

Article 8. Trade union rights (issues 27-32)

19. Mr. ADEKUOYE asked for an explanation of the statement in the core document that the trade unions in the various sectors had 77,113 members, of whom 70,013 were women. He had never before heard of a country in which there were more female than male members of trade union organizations.

20. Mr. GRISSA said that the problem of trade union rights was always difficult in a country at the stage of development reached by Guatemala. Most workers worked in the informal sector and were therefore not unionized. There remained the two other main sectors of employment: government service and the large plantations. No data had been provided by the delegation or in the report itself on the situation of trade unions in Guatemala. He would like to know the distribution of unions between the public and private sectors, whether civil servants had the right to unionize or strike, and whether teachers in particular could do so. He would also like more information on the position of unionized workers on the large banana and coffee plantations. Guatemalan history was not encouraging in that respect: conflict there had long been a major cause of revolt.

21. Mr. RATTRAY said it appeared from the report and other commentaries that trade unions were subject to a number of restrictions in Guatemala. For example, exercise of the right to strike required a two-thirds majority vote in favour. Agricultural workers were forbidden to strike at harvest time. The Government had the right to ban strikes which seriously affected the national economy and, in certain cases, the police were entitled by law to take appropriate action to ensure that work was not interrupted. The whole thrust of the conclusions of the report by the independent expert, Mrs. Pinto, on the situation of human rights in Guatemala (E/CN.4/1996/15) was that the forms that existed on paper needed to be made to exist in practice as well.

22. It was indicated by other sources that, regardless of the existence of the right to strike, few workers were willing to jeopardize their jobs by complaining about working conditions. In several cases, trade union leaders had been subjected to threats and aggression for their efforts to promote the exercise of freedom of association. He asked the delegation to indicate what new or renewed efforts the Guatemalan Government intended to make in order to enable workers to exercise freely the rights to form or join unions and to strike, as provided for in the Covenant.

23. Mr. TEXIER said that information had been received from the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission drawing attention to three recent instances of repression or attempted repression of trade union rights. In February 1996, a strike by some 2,000 unionized farm workers had resulted in their dismissal. A bill intended to regulate trade unions in the civil service had been opposed by the National Federation of Public Officials as violating their union rights. In two cases, family members of union leaders had been threatened or attacked. He asked whether that repression was continuing and what action the Government intended to take to prevent aggression against union activists and their families.

24. Mr. Alston (Chairperson) resumed the Chair.

25. Mr. GRISSA observed that, if farm workers were forbidden to strike at planting or harvest time, the right to form a union or to strike was meaningless.

26. Mrs. AHODIKEPE asked whether the labour courts that had been referred to were now functioning normally. Between 1992 and 1995, no decision had been handed down regarding workers' rights or labour legislation.

27. Mr. THAPALIA asked in what cases the right to strike was prohibited and where final authority to interpret the Labour Code rested in the case of disputes. How many hours had been lost through strikes in public and private industry in the past year? It had been reported that the national police force was seeking to form a trade union. Would such a union be guided by the same Labour Code as other workers? Were teachers and members of other professions allowed to form unions?

Article 9. Right to social security (issues 33-40)

28. Mr. AHMED asked how the widespread violence in Guatemala in the past few years had affected the right to social security. What percentage of the population would have access to social security under the new Government?

29. Mr. GRISSA said that paragraph 40 of the report quoted article 100 of the Guatemalan Constitution, promulgated in 1985, recognizing and guaranteeing the right to social security and establishing a social security system. In a country where the vast majority of the population lived below the poverty line and over 60 per cent of employed persons worked in the informal sector, what could the real value of such a provision be and how could it be applied in practice in that environment?

30. Mr. ADEKUOYE said that reference had been made, in reply to the question about the percentage of the population with access to social security, to a State pension scheme covering employees of the legislature and other bodies. He asked whether there were any categories of civil servants not covered and what contribution was made to the pension scheme by the employees themselves and by the Government. Reference had also been made to the negative impact of inflation on the various social security schemes in recent years. He asked what the rate of inflation had been and how the additional payments made to pensioners had related to it.

31. Mr. SIMMA said he understood, from the response to the question about social security and domestic workers, that under the Labour Code any serious illness of a domestic worker, most of whom were women, preventing her from performing her duties for more than one week entitled the employer to terminate her contract with no other obligation than to pay one month's wages for each full year of service. He asked whether there was anything resembling a social security net for domestic workers in such circumstances or whether they would be left completely unprotected.

32. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said that the figures which had been provided for social security coverage were for 1991. Was there any more recent information regarding the differences between the various pension schemes described, the level of the benefits paid and the relation of most benefits to the minimum wage? A large proportion of the population had never been able to contribute to a retirement or survivors' pension scheme and it was important to know the Government's intention with regard to them.

Article 10. Protection of the family, mothers and children (issues 41-44)

33. Mr. TEXIER asked whether the common-law marriages especially prevalent among the indigenous population, which were recognized in Guatemalan legislation, gave husband and wife and the children of the marriage the same legal rights as civil marriage, in matters of inheritance for example. Also, what was the ratio between religious marriages and civil marriages? On the number of hours worked by children, he noted that, according to figures provided by UNICEF, there were more than 1 million child workers in Guatemala, more than half of whom worked an average of 35 hours a week. That was already contrary to the provisions of the Labour Code whereby children aged 14 could obtain permission to work a six-hour day. According to the Constitution, moreover, children under the age of 14 should not be employed at all. In his view, the minimum age of 14 was too low. Had the Government any plans to raise it? He recognized that, in many cases, children were compelled to work for the family to survive; that was nevertheless contrary to the Covenant and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. He would be interested to learn what medium- or long-term policy the Government intended to adopt in that regard.

34. Mr. GRISSA asked whether the programme of assistance for widows and orphaned children who had fallen victim to violence in Guatemala protected the victims of both sides, those fighting for the Government and those who had fought against it. He noted from the reply to the question about the number of hours of study and hours of work of child workers that children under 13 worked six hours a day. Yet under the Education Act schooling was compulsory

for children of that age. How could they attend school? Was there any effective control at all over the hours worked by children? Also, were there any street children in Guatemala, as in some other Latin American countries, as a result of the war or other circumstances and, if so, what was being done to help them?

35. Mr. ADEKUOYE expressed appreciation for the frank reply to the question about the problem of domestic violence. What was needed was an intensive programme of education over a very long period, not just for law enforcement officers but for the population as a whole, if domestic violence was to cease to be accepted as natural. He asked what the Government was doing in that regard. He also asked whether there was any difference in the attitude of the indigenous population and that of other racial groups to domestic violence, or between the attitudes of the illiterate and functionally illiterate population and of the more privileged elite.

36. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN commended the frankness of the Government's written reply to issue 42, which was in marked contrast to its insensitive treatment of issue 23. As Mr. Adekuoye had noted, traditional attitudes seemed to be responsible for people's refusal to acknowledge the problem of domestic violence against women. In Guatemala, as in many societies, women themselves tragically accepted such discrimination as their lot, convinced of their inferiority to men. Women, as well as men, needed to be educated as to their rights. To what extent were women informed of legal recourses available to them in cases of abuse? The Government had admitted that there were currently no civil means available for lodging complaints of physical, psychological or sexual abuse, but had stressed that a bill relating to domestic violence was currently before Congress. If, in the Government's own words, legislation had no real effect on the attitudes of the judiciary, which persisted in minimizing the man's culpability, what measures would ensure that the new legislation, once adopted, would be applied in practice? It appeared that domestic violence against women was merely being disguised as a health statistic (numbers of cuts, bruises and miscarriages reported) rather than considered as a serious social problem requiring psychological treatment and legal action. She would also like to know the incidences in Guatemala of child prostitution and substance abuse among children of both sexes.

37. Mr. SIMMA said he had subjected the Government's written replies to a gender-sensitive analysis and rather suspected that the dry, legalistic passages had been drafted by men, whereas women had probably been responsible for the more openly critical remarks, which were occasionally scathing of the Government and seemed to amount to a cry for help. Could the Government explain what particular features of the new bill would encourage women to come forward without fear, confident that their complaints would be taken seriously?

38. Mrs. AHODIKEPE, referring to the Government's initial report (E/1990/5/Add.24, para.49), asked for clarification of the term "perpetually and exclusively" as applied to the marriage union. Was divorce permitted in Guatemala? Given the large numbers of children in difficult circumstances, was adoption encouraged with a view to affording them a better chance in life? She also asked the Government to describe its attitude to the enlistment of children in the armed forces.

39. Mr. CEAUSU, referring to the Government's reply to issue 43, queried the figures concerning numbers of orphans and widows resulting from the armed conflict. Only a small proportion appeared to be targeted for protection. The Government had stated that those groups were organized to carry out "income-generating productive activities". Were some orphans not too young to be thus employed? As in all countries, there must also be a proportion of children abandoned and orphaned not as a direct result of any conflict. He asked how many children were brought up in public orphanages and how many such institutions existed in Guatemala.

40. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO observed that Mrs. Ahodikepe's question regarding minors drafted to perform military service was most pertinent since many children in Guatemala had been forced to take part in the armed conflict against their will. How was the present Government proposing to demobilize those children and what was its attitude towards current military service legislation? Were the internationally-recognized rights of conscientious objectors being respected?

41. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said she was alarmed by the apparent complacency over domestic violence against women and recommended that it should be given priority attention by the present Government. As other members had noted, it was important to promote respect for the other sex through education. If a man was never punished for beating his wife, he was not likely to desist from such behaviour. The traditional acceptance of women's submissive position must be overcome, especially since Guatemala had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women without reservations.

42. Mr. RATTRAY noted that the report indicated widespread acceptance of the custom of consenting cohabitation of men and women, especially in rural areas. The institution of common-law marriage did not arise ipso facto from such cohabitation after a period of three years, but additionally required an act of formal registration. He was aware that in some societies people were inhibited by the official registration procedure. How many marriages had actually been formally registered and how were they dissolved? In so far as there might be unregistered common-law marriages, what legal obligations arose when they were dissolved, in order to guarantee the rights of spouses? He inquired whether the concept of "palimony" existed in Guatemala.

Article 11. Right to an adequate standard of living (issues 45-50)

43. Mr. SIMMA, referring to the Government's written reply concerning the legal regime governing evictions (issue 48), queried the use of the term "illegal occupation of property" and expressed surprise at the detailed description of criminal procedures adopted in such cases. He stressed that the Committee was actually more concerned with the protection of the rights of those being evicted and urged the Government to submit more adequate information once the delegation had studied the compendium of legal regimes concerning forced evictions to be provided by the Secretary.

44. Mr. GRISSA drew attention to the extremely high proportion of the population deprived of adequate housing (E/1990/5/Add.24, para. 59) and asked what was being done to remedy the situation. He requested clarification of the term "illegal settlements" in paragraph 63 of the report and asked whether the inhabitants of such settlements faced eventual expulsion.

45. Mr. TEXIER recommended that the Government should pay particular attention to article 11 and noted that loss of land seemed to be one of the main causes of poverty and armed conflict in Guatemala. With regard to the reallocation of land, what measures were being taken to ensure that all rights under article 11 would be respected? The Committee's concluding recommendations must emphasize the vital role of international cooperation. It was, after all, the duty of the United Nations to facilitate the peace process. With the advent of peace, there must be no curtailment of aid; the dire consequences of such action had been witnessed in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Given the enormous deficit of adequate housing, what long-term housing programmes were envisaged by the Government? Since a large proportion of the population had been displaced by the armed conflict, both within Guatemala and to neighbouring countries, what measures were being taken to ensure that refugees' and returnees' rights under article 11 were being respected?

46. Mr. ADEKUOYE asked how the Government intended to ensure that food-aid imports constituted a short-term policy, so as not to jeopardize the encouragement of domestic agricultural production, already affected by a significant population shift from rural to urban areas.

47. Mr. AHMED observed that despite the severe housing shortage and deplorable housing conditions described in the report (paras. 58 *et seq.*), now compounded by the gradual return of approximately 1 million displaced persons, the Government had in 1996 allocated only a minuscule 0.35 per cent of its budget to the housing sector (reply to issue 47). Under the new conditions of peace, did it intend to devote some of the funds formerly used for military purposes to alleviating the housing situation?

48. Ms. TAYA pointed out that a mere 3.2 per cent of the population owned 65 per cent of the arable land in Guatemala, whereas approximately 470,000 rural families were landless. According to information from NGO sources, there were almost 4 million uncultivated hectares of good land owned by the State or by private individuals, which would suffice to give each landless family access to an average of seven hectares. She wondered what the difficulties would be in so apportioning that land.

Article 12. Right to physical and mental health (issues 51-56)

49. Mr. MARCHAN ROMERO asked, given the decline in government health expenditure since the 1980s (report, para. 87) and the 1996 allocation of only 10.6 per cent of the total budget to health (reply to issue 52), what plans the Government had to build up the strong health programme that was needed, for instance, to combat the alarming incidence of cholera and dengue fever.

50. Mr. TEXIER wondered whether the Government was planning to institute a mandatory national health policy (which apparently did not yet exist - report, para. 85) that would enable more funds to be appropriated for health and reduce the many inequalities described in the report, such as the infant mortality rates that varied widely between the urban and rural populations, the various rural sectors themselves, and the indigenous and non-indigenous populations.

51. Mr. ADEKUOYE observed that the delegation's reply to issue 51 had actually attempted to define a number of government health policies, plans and targets, but had also indicated elsewhere that only 90 "health units" - an unclear term - were equipped to provide services for almost 500,000 patients. The Government seemed to realize the country's escalating health needs. He would therefore like an explanation why, under the circumstances, the actual percentage of the budget allocated to health had been reduced in 1996 (reply to issue 52), and whether any new health centres were planned, with what coverage, over the next five years. Also, more information would be useful on what had been done in the past three years since the new Government had come to power.

52. Mr. GRISSA said that there was a terrible discrepancy between the health conditions of the upper-income groups and those of the lower-income groups: infant mortality rates, for instance, were 12 times higher for the latter. There were virtually two nations and it was a wonder that they could coexist peacefully. It was not clear from the infant mortality rates given in the report (para. 105) how the figures, broken down geographically, differed among the indigenous and non-indigenous populations.

Articles 13 and 14. Right to education (issues 57-65)

53. Mr. GRISSA observed that only one descriptive paragraph had been devoted to education in the report (para. 116) and that the written replies did not say much on the subject either. More data were needed on the comparative literacy rates of the indigenous/non-indigenous and rural/urban populations.

54. Mr. TEXIER asked whether the Government had plans to reduce the huge gap between the constitutional guarantee of free, compulsory primary education for all and the actual situation where, by the delegation's own account (reply to issue 58 on school attendance), many school-age children did not enjoy that right.

55. Also, it was not clear from the reply to issue 59 regarding the literacy system, whether any teaching was done in the schools themselves in any of the indigenous languages as well as in Spanish. Since the higher illiteracy rates among the indigenous population (core document, para. 153) were necessarily compounded by the language barrier, more information on the Government's plans to remedy the problem would be useful.

56. Mr. SIMMA asked, regarding issue 64 and the teaching of religion in the public schools, what in practice was the effect of the provision in article 73 of the Constitution and article 103 of the National Education Act (cited in the written reply) that religious education would be optional in public schools and non-discriminatory. Could, for instance, Muslim as well as

Catholic religious beliefs be taught? Also, regarding education in general, he would appreciate specific figures comparing the salaries of teachers at all three levels of education to the salaries of equivalent civil-service personnel, and relating them to actual standards of living.

57. Mr. ADEKUOYE, referring to adult education, cited outside reports that courses for farmers who were being taught to read and write under the post-literacy programme run by the National Literacy Committee (CONALFA) and described in the reply to issue 60 had been closed down by the Government because they were considered hotbeds of rural agitation. That did not seem to be a proper response by Guatemala to the enjoyment of a right guaranteed under the Covenant. He also wondered to what ethnic group such farmers belonged, and what the overall success rate of adult literacy programmes had been.

58. Mr. THAPALIA, referring to issue 65 and the study of human rights, asked for more information on what the Government was intending to do in order to include the teaching of human rights at the various levels of education and to provide formal and informal human rights education to the different sectors of society.

Article 15. Right to take part in cultural life, to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and to benefit from the protection of intellectual property rights (issues 66 and 67)

59. Mr. GRISSA, noting that it was government policy to promote cultural activities and the cultural identity of the various groups in society (report, paras. 117-131, and written reply under art. 15), asked if there had been any revival of the ancient languages of Guatemala, which had such a rich Mayan heritage, and if indigenous languages were actually being used in any cultural activities.

60. Mr. RATTRAY asked for more specific information about the extent of the Government's conscious effort to increase an awareness of the cultural heritage of the country (report, para. 125), especially among indigenous peoples. He also wondered whether the perception of the ordinary citizen in Guatemala was that European culture was superior.

61. Mr. ARRANZ SANZ (Guatemala) said that the avalanche of questions put by the members of the Committee, expressing so many concerns, echoed his Government's own concerns, for it too was well aware of all the problems singled out. In response to those questions at the next meeting, his delegation's answers would be very broad, giving an overall synthesis rather than highly detailed plans and projections. That was unavoidable on such short notice and in the case of a nation emerging from 35 years of armed conflict which had made necessary the total reconstruction of the country. His delegation would be able to describe the general outlines of the Government's aims.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.