



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Twenty-second session

Summary record of the 482nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 30 August 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Ruskus (Vice-Chair)

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In the absence of Mr. Basharu, Mr. Ruskus, Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35

(continued)

Combined second and third periodic reports of Ecuador (continued)

(CRPD/C/ECU/2-3; CRPD/C/ECU/QPR/2)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Ecuador took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 11–20

2. **Ms. Chacón Castillo** (Ecuador) said that Ecuador was taking steps to change attitudes and practices and reforming its legislation with a view to removing the barriers to justice faced by persons with disabilities. Over 5,000 judges and other judicial officials had received training on the Handbook on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities within the Judiciary and some 15,000 judicial officials had participated in online awareness-raising programmes offered by the National Council for Persons with Disabilities. To aid physical access to justice, over 200 judicial facilities had been renovated, and technical standards on accessibility had been applied in the construction of 29 new judicial complexes.

3. Over 16,000 police officers had received training on the protocol for the arrest and detention of persons from priority groups. The Ministry of the Interior, together with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, was developing a sign language video to ensure that persons with hearing disabilities could be informed of their due process rights. Training and certification of sign language interpreters would continue in the second half of 2019. The Comprehensive Organic Criminal Code and the Organic Code of General Procedure had been amended to permit persons with disabilities to give written or sign language testimony or testimony via videoconference. Persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities could give statements in one of 116 Gesell chambers. Under article 537 of the Comprehensive Organic Criminal Code, house arrest and electronic surveillance could be used in place of pretrial detention where the persons accused had severe disabilities.

4. Between 2017 and 2019, the Special Protection Service had provided assistance to around 700 persons with disabilities whose human rights had been violated. In addition, between 2014 and 2019, the Ombudsman's Office had handled 4,673 complaints from persons with disabilities or persons from other priority groups.

5. **Ms. Cárdenas** (Ecuador) said that over 200 persons with psychosocial disabilities had been deinstitutionalized as part of a comprehensive approach adopted by the Ministry of Public Health. Furthermore, steps had been taken to promote community-based care for persons with psychosocial disabilities and for psychiatric patients. For instance, individuals could receive emergency care on an outpatient basis. Patients were also provided with rehabilitation services and helped to reintegrate into society. There were therapeutic homes for persons without family support, transitional homes for persons recovering from an acute episode before returning to family life and centres for persons recovering from addiction. Detailed information on individuals' legal, socioeconomic and clinical situation was compiled at the Julio Endara psychiatric hospital – the largest in the country – with a view to facilitating their care at health-care facilities at the primary and secondary levels.

6. Currently, 19 persons admitted to psychiatric facilities pursuant to court orders remained institutionalized, as did 44 persons with severe intellectual disabilities whose families had abandoned them. The Ministry of Public Health promoted a model of care in which patients were free to accept or refuse interventions. A number of measures had been taken to prevent involuntary institutionalization, including the approval of guidelines on when and how confinement in a psychiatric hospital could be used as a security measure for persons with mental health conditions who were in conflict with the law.

7. Health professionals were duly trained in the area of sexual and reproductive health care for persons with disabilities, and had recently been issued with a handbook laying a

particular emphasis on the prohibition of forced sterilization. Guidance was available, including in Braille, on family planning and the correct use of contraception. Health professionals were expected to obtain informed consent from patients for any health-care intervention.

8. **Ms. Salazar Suquilanda** (Ecuador) said that the Ministry of Education had implemented a number of policies to foster harmony and eradicate all forms of discrimination in the education system. For example, it had taken steps to strengthen student advice centres, which had helped to develop road maps and protocols to promote unified action against violence in schools throughout the country. Guidelines on violence in schools underlined the importance of strengthening protection, facilitating access to justice, and resolving conflicts rather than merely punishing perpetrators.

9. A peer-to-peer methodology had been implemented to encourage pupils to hold discussions on sexuality and the prevention of sexual violence. In 2019, nine professionals had been recruited specifically to train pupils and teachers in that methodology so that it could be rolled out nationally. In the last quarter of 2019, 3,500 teachers were due to be trained as part of a comprehensive approach to preventing various forms of violence in schools, and research would be conducted to gain a better understanding of the causes of such violence. Tools had been developed for professionals working in the area of violence prevention in schools. The tools were intended to provide emotional support to those dealing directly with victims of rights violations.

10. Measures were being taken to strengthen inclusive education through district support units. Around 600 inclusion support personnel were employed nationwide to assist pupils with disabilities and help to maintain an environment of compassion and respect, in which differences and diversity were treated as assets. Pupils were also encouraged to devise strategies for the inclusion of their peers.

11. **Ms. Vela Yépez** (Ecuador) said that the Government was implementing a public policy that aimed to provide the most marginalized segments of the population with a minimum floor of social protection by strengthening inclusion. Through seven “missions”, it was implementing the Lifelong Rights Plan to address the structural causes of inequality and poverty and promote a more just and equitable society. One of those missions sought to guarantee comprehensive support for persons with disabilities and their families by promoting their right to make decisions; ensuring stable incomes; providing comprehensive health care; building capacities, skills and competencies; promoting autonomy; enhancing family and social support and inclusion; and detecting, preventing and tackling violence.

12. Social protection services were delivered with due regard for the rights of persons with disabilities and their families, in keeping with international and national standards. Disability policy was based on a social model of rights that recognized that persons with disabilities contributed to society on an equal basis with others and that promoted respect for dignity, equality and liberty of the person.

13. Services were offered through three modalities. Day-care centres aimed to help persons with disabilities reach their full potential and promote social inclusion through joint work with families and communities, while inclusive referral and reception centres provided institutional support for persons with disabilities who had been abandoned or had no family support for other reasons. In-home and community-based assistance was provided to persons with severe disabilities living in remote areas who did not have access to institutional services. In all, those three forms of service delivery, for which more than US\$ 19 million a year was budgeted, reached nearly 34,000 persons with a range of disabilities.

14. With a view to combating social exclusion and changing public attitudes, the Government sought to ensure that persons with disabilities and members of their families were involved in the formulation of disability plans and policies. It had also established forums for dialogue that made it possible for persons with disabilities and their families to air demands, set up mutual aid groups and strengthen civil society. One of the aims of the policies formulated by the Office of the Undersecretary for Disability Affairs was to promote the idea that persons with disabilities themselves and their caregivers shared rights and responsibilities with regard to care. Efforts were made to highlight the work of carers

and ensure that it was viewed as work that contributed to the well-being of both households and the country as a whole.

15. The Ministry and the Inter-American Development Bank had signed an agreement to foster the establishment of diversified support networks to help protect the rights and improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities. In addition, the Ministry had proposed the development of homes for independent living where persons with disabilities could live in a community and receive social and educational support to enable them to acquire skills, abilities and self-confidence and become better at managing their own affairs.

16. Cash transfers administered by the Ministry were designed to help meet the needs of families in poverty or extreme poverty. Nearly 5,000 persons with disabilities received the Human Development Bond Cash Transfer of US\$ 50 a month. More than 133,000 persons with disabilities received other types of cash transfer, including those provided as part of the Joaquín Gallegos Lara voucher scheme. Persons with severe disabilities who lived in poverty and required constant care were eligible for cash transfers of US\$ 240 a month under that scheme. As of July 2019, 31,000 persons had been receiving such transfers and the number would increase by 8,000 in December. At the same time, the amount of the disability pension would rise from US\$ 50 to US\$ 100 per month. In 2014, a survey of a sample of the beneficiaries of Joaquín Gallegos Lara vouchers had shown that 45 per cent of the cash transferred had been used to cover expenditures relating to health care, while the remainder had been used for food and household expenditures, transport and education.

17. Foreign nationals in Ecuador had the same rights and responsibilities as Ecuadorian nationals. No one was discriminated against because he or she was a migrant. In recent years, Venezuelan nationals had entered Ecuador in large numbers. The Ministry helped migrants gain access to public services and referred them to providers of humanitarian aid, with a particular focus on priority groups. An interministerial protocol on special protection for child and adolescent migrants had been adopted in 2018.

18. All Venezuelan nationals entering Ecuador were required to have a valid visa. It was possible to apply online for a humanitarian visa. A passport was necessary, but passports that had expired up to five years earlier were accepted. Applicants were required to submit a police certificate and appear for an interview at a consulate in Bogotá, Caracas or Lima. The visa was issued free of charge and was good for two years.

19. The Comprehensive Organic Act on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women (2018) provided for the allocation of the resources necessary to take all relevant protective measures. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities had produced road maps and protocols to ensure that persons with disabilities knew where to turn to seek redress for violations of their rights, while the Ministry of Education had developed protocols for dealing with violence in the education system. Ministerial Agreement No. 006 of 22 January 2018, issued by the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, set out guidelines for preventing and responding to acts of violence against children, adolescents, persons with disabilities and older persons committed by providers of care services. Similar protocols had been developed by other State institutions. A guide to sexual and reproductive rights and a life free from violence for persons with disabilities had been published in 2018. A recent study by the National Council for Gender Equality had shed light on the links between pregnancy in adolescents with disabilities and gender-based violence.

20. **Ms. Kronfle Gómez** (Ecuador) said that the Ecuadorian authorities were aware of the difference between equality on paper and equality in practice. A number of specific policies and procedures had been put in place to ensure a human rights approach and uphold the rights of persons with disabilities. The rights enumerated in the Constitution and the international human rights instruments to which Ecuador was a party were directly applicable, meaning that anyone, through the country's courts or other institutions, could seek immediate remedy for a violation of those rights. Hence, there was a system of higher laws, including the Constitution and international human rights instruments, that allowed the people of Ecuador to exercise their rights, despite the existence of any gaps or incongruences in other laws.

21. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities had informed the Civil Registry that persons with disabilities were entitled to make autonomous decisions concerning their lives, including in respect of marriage. The Council's legislative commission was working to identify laws, including those regulating marriage, that might include provisions incompatible with the Convention or the Constitution. The participation of the public was crucial to identifying needed reforms and ensuring that they were seen through to completion. Discrimination on the basis of disability was punishable by imprisonment under article 176 of the Comprehensive Organic Criminal Code.

22. **Mr. Torres Correa** (Ecuador) said that a recent survey of social rehabilitation centres had made it possible to identify persons with disabilities who had committed crimes and been deprived of their liberty. Some prisons were accessible to prisoners with some kinds of disabilities. In some cases, persons with disabilities had been given alternatives to detention, such as sentences requiring them to wear ankle monitors. Nearly 200 persons deprived of their liberty had received certificates attesting to their disabilities. Prison guards received training on working with prisoners with disabilities.

23. In an effort to give effect to the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled, Ecuador had drawn up a national catalogue of published works in accessible formats. The catalogue would be of use to students and librarians throughout the country.

Articles 21–33

24. **Mr. Martin** asked what the State party was doing to improve the relatively poor health outcomes of people with intellectual disabilities, especially in rural areas and areas that were hard to reach. He also asked what was being done to involve all people with disabilities in recreational, leisure and sporting activities. In particular, he wondered what such activities were available for people with intellectual disabilities other than Down syndrome. In addition, he wondered whether indigenous people with disabilities living in rural or remote areas had access to basic services and whether they could afford the services they needed. Lastly, he wished to know whether the State party was taking steps to involve organizations of indigenous persons with disabilities or organizations of people with intellectual disabilities in policy- and decision-making.

25. **Mr. Ishikawa** said that he would like to know what proportion of television programmes and popular movies in the State party were available with subtitles. Further information about the measures being taken to make television programmes, movies and websites more accessible would be welcome. The Committee would be interested in learning more about the accessibility, or inaccessibility, of public websites.

26. It would be helpful to know what specific steps had been taken to promote inclusive education for persons with disabilities who belonged to indigenous and Montubio communities. It seemed that very few children with disabilities were educated in mainstream schools, in spite of the national legislation on inclusive education. He invited the delegation to offer its opinion on why inclusive education was not being promoted more effectively. Lastly, the Committee would be interested in knowing more about the measures that the Government was taking to make schools more physically accessible, to produce educational texts in Braille or digital formats and to recruit teachers with sign language skills.

27. **Mr. Schefer** said that he was concerned about the legislative reform to article 102 of the Organic Act on Disabilities, which had eliminated the powers of the Ombudsman's Office to receive and address complaints of violation of the rights of persons with disabilities. Those powers had been transferred to the authorities of the entity accused of the violation, creating conflicts of interest and putting the independence of the complaints process at risk. He would like to know what measures were planned to guarantee the independence of the complaint resolution procedure and whether the Government was considering reinstating the powers of the Ombudsman's Office.

28. Further information on how members were appointed to the independent monitoring mechanism administered by the National Council for Persons with Disabilities would be welcome. In particular, he wondered whether the organization of that mechanism met the

requirements of the Paris Principles, as required under article 33 of the Convention. He wished to take the opportunity to remind the State party that the Committee needed to be able to distinguish clearly between the contributions made by Governments and those made by civil society. The inclusion of a prominent member of civil society in the State party's delegation had affected the Committee's ability to discern the most urgent issues facing persons with disabilities in Ecuador, especially as certain views presented by the member of civil society in question differed from those submitted by other civil society organizations. For future dialogues with the Committee, he therefore suggested that the State party reconsider the inclusion of civil society representatives in its delegation.

29. **Mr. Buntan** said that the State party was to be commended for having officially recognized sign language in 2012. However, the Committee had received reports indicating that the implementation of sign language usage in courts, public institutions, universities, hospitals and elsewhere had been very slow. He understood that it was still difficult for deaf persons to access public information and services because of a shortage of sign language interpreters. Blind persons had similar difficulties accessing information, including in the education sphere, because Braille was still not widely used, while the situation for deafblind persons was even worse. He would appreciate further information on the concrete measures taken to give practical effect to the provisions of the Convention relating to inclusive education and the accessibility of public services and information.

30. He would be grateful for up-to-date statistics on the rate of employment of persons with disabilities, especially in the public sector, and information on the measures taken to increase that rate. He understood that the State party would publish a new census in 2020 and wondered to what extent persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, had been involved in designing the census questionnaire and whether the Government had incorporated the short set of questions of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics. Lastly, he welcomed the State party's promotion of the Marrakesh Treaty and invited the delegation to provide further information on how the Government was ensuring that its provisions were effectively implemented.

31. **Ms. Gamio Ríos** said that the Committee had been informed that the Ministry of Education had received nearly US\$ 15 million of funding from the Inter-American Development Bank. The Committee would be interested to know how that money had been used and with what effect. She had the impression that the various missions being carried out under the Lifelong Rights Plan were employing a charity-based model and would welcome clarification from the delegation in that regard. Lastly, she wondered whether reports that the Government was promoting segregated housing areas for persons with disabilities were accurate.

32. **Mr. Lovászy** said that he would like to know whether the Committee's general comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education had been widely disseminated in the State party and had been incorporated into the curriculum for teacher training. He would also welcome further information on how parents of children with disabilities, and the children themselves, were involved in choosing their preferred form of education. Could parents seek redress if they felt that their choices were not being respected? He would like to receive further information on the amount allocated for the local inclusion support units. Specifically, was there a separate budget line for the units or were they allocated funds by the Ministry of Education? He invited the delegation to explain how the Government planned to maintain the budget and provide the necessary financial and human resources to ensure the sustained success of the inclusion support initiative.

33. **Mr. Martin** said that it was his understanding that persons with intellectual disabilities in Ecuador were still being educated in special schools. He wished to know when the State party was going to make the crucial shift from special schools to inclusive education.

34. **Ms. Utami** said that the Committee would appreciate further information on the assessment criteria applied to determine whether persons with disabilities were eligible for conditional cash transfer schemes. Clarification as to how those schemes were monitored to ensure that they were reaching all intended beneficiaries, particularly in the remotest areas, would also be appreciated. She would like to know how the Government ensured that

persons with psychosocial and multiple disabilities in rural areas had access to habilitation and rehabilitation services and to financial aid.

35. **The Chair** said that it would be useful to hear about the incentives offered for the employment of persons with disabilities in the open labour market. Further information on the formal recognition of intellectual and psychosocial disabilities would also be appreciated, as would details on the support for social inclusion provided to individuals with such disabilities. Lastly, he would like to know what steps were being taken to ensure that national legislation protected children with disabilities from corporal punishment.

The meeting was suspended at 11.35 a.m. and resumed at 12.05 p.m.

36. **Ms. Kronfle Gómez** (Ecuador), speaking as a representative of civil society in Ecuador, said that she had been appointed to the delegation by her fellow members of civil society. To suggest that her inclusion in the delegation had created a conflict of interest was to underestimate the key role played by civil society in working alongside public officials to find solutions to the challenges facing persons with disabilities in Ecuador. Her presence on the delegation did not in any way detract from the ability of civil society to offer constructive criticism and to play an active part in government decision-making processes.

37. **Ms. Salazar Suquilanda** (Ecuador) said that the national education system had not originally been designed with inclusive education in mind and that the Ministry of Education had therefore faced considerable challenges in its efforts to develop inclusive education services across the country. To tackle those challenges, the Ministry had formulated a series of strategies in areas such as curriculum development and teacher training, which had all been designed according to the principle that vulnerable groups required attention tailored to their specific needs in the field of education.

38. The Ministry of Education had carried out door-to-door surveys to identify persons, including persons with disabilities and members of indigenous populations, who were not enrolled in school. As a result of the work carried out under the “Las Manuelas” Mission, about 300 such persons had been identified, 123 of whom had undergone a gradual process of inclusion in the national education system, the aim of which was not just to offer access to education but to ensure that students continued to attend classes and successfully completed their schooling.

39. A total of 107,543 teachers had been trained in specialized education since 2014. A new training programme on inclusive education and sustainable learning was envisaged for the period 2020–2021. An important component of that training would be awareness-raising on how best to cater to the needs of vulnerable groups.

40. International cooperation projects had made an important contribution to facilitating accessibility improvements in the national education system. The World Bank, for example, had provided Ecuador with US\$ 4.5 million to build a fully accessible model school. Construction would start in 2020. Over US\$ 350,000 of the World Bank funding would be invested in the development of a set of national specialized education standards. Civil society organizations and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities had been invited to work with the Ministry of Education to design communication tools and technical materials that would be made available to the country’s entire education community.

41. The Ministry of Education would be working with other ministries to use the funding received from the Inter-American Development Bank to promote the social inclusion of persons with disabilities. A total of nearly US\$ 9 million had been earmarked for inclusive education and the implementation of the specialized education model. Of the remaining funds, nearly US\$ 1.5 million would be allocated for teacher training, over US\$ 5 million would be spent on technological and educational resources and school buildings and some US\$ 350,000 would go towards financing a campaign aimed at raising awareness among teachers and families of a new model of shared responsibility for the education of persons with disabilities.

42. Under the shared responsibility model, psychologists and educators at local inclusion support units interviewed parents as part of psychopedagogical assessments to determine the best educational approach for children with disabilities. The parents were presented with the full results of those assessments, including suggestions as to the most

appropriate schooling options, so that they could exercise their legitimate right to choose their preferred form of education for their children. Since specialized education institutions were not available in all parts of the country, an alternative was for students with disabilities to benefit from the assistance of one of the 585 inclusion support teachers who provided one-to-one support aimed at ensuring that pupils did not feel segregated or excluded within the education system.

43. Despite the existence of specialized educational institutions, the Government did not in any way promote segregation of students with disabilities. Rather, the specialized institutions were a means of addressing specific needs, such as the need for sign language interpretation. The specialized educational institutions used the same curricula as mainstream schools. Twelve types of technical training programmes had been introduced for students with disabilities in order to enable them to acquire occupational skills. Civil society organizations, including organizations representing persons with intellectual disabilities and hearing impairments, had actively contributed to the development of the new educational models.

44. A total of 66 students with visual impairments were enrolled in 3 specialized educational establishments, with 25 teachers and two professionals from local inclusion support units. In addition, 777 students with visual impairments attended 553 mainstream establishments, with the assistance of 125 professionals from local support units. A total of 544 students with hearing impairments were enrolled in 8 specialized schools, with 98 teachers and 8 professionals from local support units. In addition, about a thousand students with hearing impairments attended 770 mainstream schools. The total number of students with disabilities attending all types of schools was 46,109. The total number attending specialized schools was 9,223. Of that number, some 1,600 were adults who had returned to school to finish their education.

45. **Ms. Cárdenas** (Ecuador) said that the National Disabilities Register identified persons with disabilities in terms of their type of disability, gender, age and geographical location. In August 2019, there had been 106,382 persons with intellectual disabilities, of whom 48,203 were women and 58,179 were men. There were 14,242 children aged 0 to 12 years with intellectual disabilities. As part of a biopsychosocial approach based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, persons were classified on the basis not only of structural and functional criteria and diagnoses, but also environmental and contextual factors; both abilities and disabilities were taken into consideration. The functional aspect of the classification process assessed impairments in intellectual function, such as mental retardation, and considered numerous pathologies in addition to Down syndrome, such as infantile cerebral palsy and aphasia. In the case of psychosocial disabilities, cognitive, emotional and behavioural impairments were assessed, taking into account the person's age.

46. The Ministry of Public Health ran 3,082 primary care centres, of which 2,322 were in rural areas. The Government had prioritized care for the rural population through the "Neighbourhood Doctor" strategy, under which multidisciplinary teams conducted door-to-door searches for vulnerable persons. The teams had thus far identified 77,865 persons with disabilities. Primary care technicians played a key role in ensuring access to health care throughout the country. The Neighbourhood Doctor strategy was currently being implemented in over 92 per cent of the national territory, mainly in rural areas.

47. Since 2014, more than 1.5 million screenings had been conducted under the neonatal metabolic screening programme and 362 cases were currently receiving treatment, including cases of congenital hypothyroidism, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, phenylketonuria and galactosaemia. The neurodevelopmental screening programme was designed to ensure the early detection of psychomotor risks with a view to preventing intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. During the period from 2016 to June 2019, nearly 1.8 million children had been screened and cases in which neurodevelopmental delays had been detected had been referred to clinical psychology professionals for further assessment and treatment, including rehabilitation aimed at preventing, restoring or compensating for the loss of function.

48. The Ministry of Public Health had signed an agreement with the MoveAbility Foundation of the International Committee of the Red Cross on 21 March 2019 with a view to improving public services for the physical rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, their inclusion in society and their full enjoyment of their rights. The Ministry had also signed an agreement five years earlier with the Cuban Government for physical therapy services. The 105 specialists currently working in health-care facilities in Ecuador had provided services to over 109,258 persons between January and July 2019.

49. **Ms. Vela Yépez** (Ecuador) said that the seven missions that were being conducted under the Lifelong Rights Plan did not employ a charity-based approach. The Las Manueles Mission viewed disability as an aspect of diversity and recognized that it was a result of the interaction between human beings and their environment. The mission was intended to ensure comprehensive support for persons with disabilities living in situations of poverty and extreme poverty and their families, to foster their autonomy and full integration into the family and society and to promote respect for their dignity and recognition of their independence and freedom to take decisions on their future. An important aspect of the Las Manueles Mission was the identification and socioeconomic characterization of the conditions of family units comprising persons with disabilities that were in situations of poverty and extreme poverty in order to design a support plan for them.

50. Over one third of the persons who benefited from social protection services lived in rural areas. In 80 per cent of cases, an extramural approach was applied, wherein technical experts visited the homes of persons with disabilities with a view to cooperating with their families in promoting their full development.

51. **Ms. Chacón Castillo** (Ecuador) said that steps were being taken to amend the Organic Code on Children and Adolescents in order to criminalize corporal punishment. It was proposed to include a specific provision prohibiting corporal punishment of children and adolescents. Indigenous communities were currently taking steps to eliminate corporal punishment from their customary or traditional practices. Indigenous and rural communities were also taking vigorous action to promote the welfare of older persons.

52. **Mr. Torres Correa** (Ecuador) said that 52,400 persons with disabilities were employed in the private sector and 19,767 were employed in the public sector, constituting 73 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively, of the total workforce. The current employment quota was 4 per cent, and protection against dismissal was provided for the persons concerned. Improvements in accessibility had been achieved on 108, or 87 per cent, of the country's 123 institutional websites. Discussions of key questions were under way with a view to ensuring the accuracy of the 2020 census with regard to persons with disabilities. The Washington Group questions had been considered, but were not deemed the best option, as information on persons with disabilities was already available from an administrative register.

53. The State ensured transparency in its interactions with civil society. It did not interfere in the activities of the various federations and associations, which enjoyed full independence with regard to their internal affairs. Meetings with civil society were organized every three months to discuss and assess the implementation of public policies in every province.

54. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities was in the process of facilitating access to legal instruments and other public information in accessible formats, including sign language and Easy Read. There was no segregation in housing. Persons with disabilities were certainly not housed in "ghettos".

55. Respect for diverse populations, including persons with disabilities, was given high priority in Ecuador. A great deal remained to be done, but vigorous action was being taken at all levels. Ecuador did not espouse a charity-based approach. He wished to make that clear. However, it had to be recognized that disability exacerbated poverty, and the State had a responsibility to help people overcome that dual challenge and to ensure adequate support for persons with disabilities and their families.

56. **Ms. Gamio Ríos** said she was convinced that the State party would do its utmost to eliminate persistent impediments to its full implementation of the Convention. Many

commendable laws existed, but were still not being fully implemented in practice. Denial of reasonable accommodation was not yet recognized as a form of discrimination against persons with disabilities. Guardianship and wardship persisted, which meant that the equality of persons with disabilities before the law was still not being recognized. Pejorative terms were still used in legislation to refer to persons with disabilities. The Committee was also concerned about the situation of persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities and indigenous persons with disabilities. It encouraged the State party to take more determined action to ensure that all organizations of persons with disability were consulted and felt included.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.