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Chairman: Mr. Al-Hinai (Oman)
later: Mr. Oda (Vice-Chairman) (Egypt)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 119: Human rights questions (continued)

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (continued)

(A/56/168, A/56/190, A/56/204, A/56/207 and Add.1, A/56/209, A/56/212, A/56/230, A/56/253, A/56/254 and Add.1, A/56/255, A/56/256, A/56/258, A/56/263, A/56/271, A/56/292, A/56/310, A/56/334, A/56/341 and A/56/344)

(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives (continued)

(A/56/210, A/56/217, A/56/220, A/56/278, A/56/281, A/56/312, A/56/327, A/56/336, A/56/337, A/56/340, A/56/409 and Add.1, A/56/440, A/56/460, A/56/479 and A/56/505; A/C.3/56/4, A/C.3/56/7)

(d) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (continued)

(A/56/36 and Add.1)

(e) Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (continued)

(A/56/36 and Add.1)

1. **Mr. De Loecker** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Cyprus and Malta on agenda item 119 (c), emphasized the European Union's commitment to the principles of the universality, interdependence and indivisibility of human rights, as evidenced by the proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights at the Nice summit meeting in December 2000. Conscious of the work that remained to be done in addressing racism and xenophobia, the right of asylum, immigration and trafficking in human beings, and the need to promote respect for human rights and democracy throughout the world, the European Union each year published a number of reports on those rights both at home and abroad. Moreover, it was opposed to the death penalty wherever it existed and was pressing for its universal abolition.

2. The European Union would be expressing its concern at the human rights situation in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran in the resolutions it had decided to submit. In the meantime it noted with regret the deterioration of the human rights situation in a number of countries.

3. It was extremely alarmed at the serious human rights violations committed by the Taliban in Afghanistan, in particular against women and children. It drew attention to the plight of the civilian population, which was even more vulnerable with the approach of winter, and stressed that the question of human rights should be amply considered in any transitional arrangement in Afghanistan. In that context it called on the countries of Central Asia fully to respect civil liberties and human rights, however difficult their position in the context of the Afghan crisis.

4. On the subject of Burundi, he explained that the European Union welcomed the fact that a transitional Government had been set up in November 2001 and hoped that it would endeavour to improve the human rights situation. However, it was concerned about the recent escalation of violence and called on those rebel movements that had not yet ceased fighting to commit themselves fully to the peace negotiations in accordance with the Arusha process.

5. The European Union called on Ethiopia and Eritrea to resume the release of prisoners of war as soon as possible and expressed its concern at the arrest of members of the opposition, human rights activists and independent journalists in the Gambia, even though the recent elections had been peaceful. It deplored the fact that Guinea had abandoned the moratorium on carrying out the death penalty, which had been in force since 1984. It noted with concern the clashes that had taken place in Somalia in August 2001 and the deterioration in the political climate in Togo which might stand in the way of democratic general elections. While it welcomed the Abuja Agreement and the establishment of a contact group in the Southern African Development Community, it was concerned at the deterioration of the situation in Zimbabwe where incidents of violence and political intimidation, perpetrated mainly by supporters of the ruling party, were on the increase and regretted that the Zimbabwean Government had not consented to a fact-finding mission of the European Union to observe the elections.

6. The European Union condemned the repeated violations of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel, including the illegal settlements, and requested Israel to show greater restraint in the use of military force. The policy of extrajudicial executions, restrictions on the freedom of movement of the Palestinians, the destruction of Palestinian homes, the ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees and the breaches of the provisions of international humanitarian law were unacceptable. The European Union strongly condemned all forms of terrorism and called on the Palestinian Authority to do its utmost to arrest and bring to justice the perpetrators and those responsible for terrorist acts. It was deeply concerned about the rapid trials that were taking place and requested the Authority to respect human rights and democratic principles and to maintain its moratorium on capital punishment.

7. The European Union was also concerned about the degradation of the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, following a series of politically motivated arrests and trials against human rights advocates. It deplored the climate of violence that existed in Colombia, particularly against human rights advocates. It also regretted that Guatemala had extended the application of the death penalty and was concerned about the political crisis experienced by Haiti since the contested senatorial elections of May 2000.

8. He also noted the lack of progress in the human rights situation in some countries, such as Bangladesh, where acts of violence had been perpetrated during the electoral process, particularly against religious minorities, and where the moratorium on the death penalty had ended.

9. No real progress had been achieved in China, despite the announcement of the reform of the administrative detention system and the amendment of the legal provisions against torture. Although it was committed to the Euro-Chinese dialogue on human rights, the European Union did not believe that it was an acceptable option unless it was reflected in some progress in the situation. In that connection, it deplored the extensive and increased use of the death penalty, particularly in the context of a campaign entitled "Strike hard", the attacks on freedom of worship and the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, particularly in Tibet and in Xinjiang, and the treatment of Falun Gong followers, as well as of North Korean

refugees who were being forcibly repatriated to their country where the human rights situation was still as deplorable and where they ran the risk of being executed. He pointed out, in that regard, that there were cases of trafficking of Korean women and young girls on the border with China as a result of a deterioration in the economic situation, and that North Korea currently continued to apply the death penalty and to impede the exercise of many freedoms.

10. The European Union condemned the increased violence in Kashmir, particularly the attack on the Parliament at Srinagar on 1 October 2000. It was gratified that the transfer of powers had occurred peacefully and democratically in Indonesia, and the new President had signed decree No. 96, creating a special court to judge human rights violations committed in East Timor, although it believed that its jurisdiction should be broadened both in time and in space in order to promote the normalization of relations between East Timor and Indonesia. While there had been a positive development in the return of the refugees, the European Union was nevertheless concerned about the fate of the orphaned children who had been transferred to Indonesia and were separated from their families. It was disappointed about the conduct of the trial relating to the murders of three colleagues from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in West Timor. The European Union requested the Indonesian Government to put an end to human rights violations in the province of Aceh, to bring the perpetrators to justice and to take steps to ensure respect for human rights in all the provinces, in particular Maluku, Kalimantan and Irian Jaya.

11. The European Union was concerned about the human rights situation in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, where arbitrary political arrests had been recorded. It deplored the continued human rights violations in Myanmar, particularly the extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, forcible disappearances, rape, acts of torture, inhuman treatment and mass arrests. Forced labour remained a current practice in Myanmar and the European Union supported the recommendation that there should be a long-term representation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in that country. It nevertheless welcomed the encouraging signs, such as the discussions initiated between the military leaders and Aung San Suu Kyi, the liberation of approximately 180

political prisoners and the reopening of some of the offices of the National League for Democracy.

12. He called upon the Nepalese leaders to put a stop to the violence against the population in order to establish a constructive atmosphere that would be conducive to dialogue. With regard to the situation in Pakistan, the European Union was concerned that political liberties were still limited, despite the announcement of general elections for October 2002, the holding of local elections and the establishment of elected local councils. It urged the Pakistani authorities to combat discrimination against women and ethnic and sectarian intolerance, particularly towards religious minorities. It also condemned the application of the death penalty in Pakistan, in particular for blasphemy, and reminded the Pakistani leaders that they had made a commitment to prosecute the perpetrators of "honour crimes".

13. As for the political situation in Sri Lanka, the European Union condemned the terrorist attack perpetrated by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam at the Colombo airport and the assassination attempt against the President. It called upon all the parties to put an end to the frequent human rights violations and to endeavour to conclude a lasting peace.

14. In Thailand, where the authorities had ratified the ILO Convention relating to the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and established a National Commission on Human Rights, the human rights situation had in general remained unchanged during the past year. The human rights situation in Viet Nam was still also a matter of concern.

15. The human rights situation in Saudi Arabia continued to give rise to serious concern. The European Union deplored the restrictions on public freedoms and the failure to respect women's rights and called on the Saudi Arabian Government to ratify the two International Human Rights Covenants, to implement the conventions that it had ratified and to cooperate with United Nations human rights mechanisms.

16. The European Union was extremely concerned about a number of recent developments in Egypt, including trials of civilians under military laws and tribunals.

17. In Tunisia, the human rights situation had not improved to any significant degree, as was evidenced

by the restrictions on the freedom of action and expression imposed on human rights organizations.

18. The European Union deplored the consequences on the public of the civil war in Angola, including UNITA attacks against civilian targets and the suffering caused by the humanitarian crisis. It believed that the human rights situation would only really improve with the return of peace, which depended on genuine dialogue among all the parties to the conflict. It emphasized the role of the churches and civilian society in the search for peace and national reconciliation and encouraged the Government to take further measures to promote human rights.

19. The European Union remained concerned about the human rights situation in Cameroon, particularly with regard to abuses by the military authorities and extrajudicial executions.

20. The European Union deplored the serious attacks on freedom of association and the independence of the judiciary in Kenya, as well as extrajudicial executions by the security forces, torture and the abusive use of force.

21. While it took note of the amnesty for exiled political activists, the European Union regretted that the Liberian Government had not taken any positive steps to reconstruct the country and promote respect for human rights.

22. The European Union noted with satisfaction the improvements in the human rights situation in Uganda but remained concerned about the situation with regard to political freedoms, including the fact that political parties were unable to function normally.

23. The European Union expected Cuba to take active steps to improve its human rights records, by, for example, ratifying the two International Human Rights Covenants, freeing political prisoners and abolishing the death penalty, or at least introducing a moratorium on executions.

24. The European Union welcomed the judicial reforms and harmonization of legislation by the Russian Federation and the stance adopted by President Putin against re-establishing the death penalty. It remained concerned by certain problems, such as the limitations on freedom of the press and the incidence of racist aggression. While it welcomed the cooperation that had developed between the Russian authorities, on the one hand, and the Council of Europe

and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), on the other, it also remained concerned about the situation in the Chechen Republic. It called on the Russian authorities to improve the human rights situation in the region, to put an end to the abuses committed by the Russian security forces and the impunity that they enjoyed, and to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations in the region.

25. Freedom of expression, including that of the press, was still subject to severe restrictions in Ukraine.

26. The European Union welcomed the constitutional reforms planned in Turkey with regard to civil liberties and the abolition of the death penalty and hoped that they would be implemented with all speed. It felt bound to express its disappointment, however, regarding the number of complaints about human rights violations.

27. The human rights situation in Cyprus remained unchanged and problems persisted in the northern part of the island. The European Union called on all the parties concerned to cooperate with a view to reaching a political settlement to the conflict.

28. Among the countries where the human rights situation had improved over the past year, mention should be made of Mexico, where the federal authorities no longer restricted the activities of non-governmental or foreign organizations, in Chiapas or elsewhere.

29. In Peru, where democratic and transparent elections had taken place, the new President of the Republic had expressed his firm intention to strengthen democracy, revitalize the economy, work for national reconciliation and promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The European Union stood ready to cooperate with the new Peruvian Government in order to help it tackle its difficult task.

30. During the elections that had taken place in 2000 and 2001 in Albania, the European Union had noted an increase in respect for democratic rights. It welcomed the new Government's intention of combating corruption, crime and trafficking in human beings, particularly trafficking in women.

31. The European Union welcomed the decision of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to resolve the crisis confronting the country through dialogue. In cooperation with OSCE, NATO and the United States, it intended to play an active role in the process, inter

alia, by sending observers. It welcomed the Security Council's support for the proposal for the deployment of an international force in the country.

32. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Union noted a slow but sure improvement in the human rights situation, which now had the attention of the authorities. Efforts to facilitate the return of refugees and displaced persons should be pursued, with the support of the international community, in the interests of stability and reconciliation.

33. The European Union welcomed the progress made with regard to democratization in Croatia since 2000 and the intention of the Croatian authorities to continue to work for the return of refugees and for minority rights. It hoped that Croatia would implement the legislation and reforms required for that purpose.

34. The European Union congratulated the people and the political leaders of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the significant progress made towards establishing democracy.

35. In Algeria the European Union was closely following the proposals for political, economic and social reform aimed at restoring peace and prosperity. The Union intended to support the implementation of economic and social reform and consolidation of the rule of law and good governance.

36. In Mozambique the European Union, which had expressed its concern at the fatal incidents at Cabo Delgado in 2000, welcomed the pursuance of the necessary inquiries and the restoration of order.

37. His delegation regretted the non-renewal of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Rwanda, but welcomed the continued cooperation between the Rwandan Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the progress in the human rights field. He urged the authorities to take the necessary steps to promote national reconstruction and ensure the protection of minorities.

38. In Sierra Leone the European Union welcomed the positive role played by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in the peace process. He stressed the importance of national reconciliation, the holding of free elections, respect for human rights, the primacy of law and the unimpeded return of refugees and displaced persons. He trusted that there would be

an end to the serious and systematic violations of human rights which had been committed in the country for some years.

39. The European Union welcomed the positive developments with regard to human rights in Cambodia, notwithstanding the many difficulties that remained, such as the precarious nature of the rule of law, corruption and the continued existence of a climate of violence in a number of localities.

40. Lastly, the European Union welcomed the signs of an improvement in the human rights situation in Malaysia, in particular the appointment of a national human rights commission.

41. **Mr. Paolillo** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the associated States, Bolivia and Chile, under agenda item 119 (b), said that the constituent act of the Southern Common Market reflected the commitments made by its members, and by the associated States, to promote democracy and the rule of law as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms. Those States considered that the establishment and defence of democratic institutions was the best way to tackle social, political and economic problems. Such principles, reaffirmed in every declaration by the group, had become mandatory in 1998, with the adoption of the Ushuaia Protocol (Argentina), which provided that respect for democratic institutions was an essential condition for the process of integration between the States parties to the Southern Common Market and that any interruption in the proper functioning of institutions in a State party would immediately trigger consultations with that State and, where appropriate, the application of measures that could include suspension of its rights and obligations in the context of the integration process.

42. For the States members of MERCOSUR and the associated States, State action must be based on the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted in 1993 at the conclusion of the World Conference on Human Rights. Those States were also convinced of the need to strengthen human rights machinery at the international level, in particular in the United Nations system, so as to guarantee the universal promotion and protection of human rights. In addition, further strengthening of cooperation was essential for the effective implementation of the international

obligations that guaranteed the full enjoyment of human rights to everyone.

43. He drew attention to the holding at Asunción of a second meeting of ministerial representatives for human rights questions, a mechanism whereby the member States and associated States coordinated their efforts and exchanged information on human rights questions with a view to presenting a common view at international meetings. A workshop for those States on human rights had been held at Montevideo from 22 to 25 October on the subject of the application by national courts of international human rights standards. The workshop, in which the High Commissioner for Human Rights had participated, represented the first example of cooperation between MERCOSUR and the associated countries and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The workshop had covered the strengthening of the implementation of international human rights instruments at the domestic level through the dissemination of information on those instruments, as well as the exchange of information on judicial practice, decided cases and the methods used by each member State to resolve human rights conflicts in accordance with international standards. The ministerial representatives responsible for human rights questions also held their third meeting in conjunction with the workshop.

44. With regard to the outcome of the World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, MERCOSUR and its associated countries undertook to cooperate actively with a view to the immediate adoption by the General Assembly of decisions that would lead to the establishment of the follow-up machinery approved at Durban, and more particularly a unit within the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to combat discrimination.

45. Respect for human rights, the promotion of democracy and the strengthening of the rule of law required continuing cooperation between countries and regions as well as with the United Nations system.

46. **Archbishop Martino** (Observer for the Holy See), speaking on agenda item 119 (c), noted with concern that the report on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/56/253) revealed that, in many parts of the world, States with an official religion were applying discriminatory or intolerant policies with regard to minorities, that all religions were

affected by rising extremism, and that there was a gradual shift towards non-belief within society, characterized by a growing militancy that competed, and even conflicted, with religion. The attitude that humanity took towards the greatest of all mysteries, the mystery of God, lay at the heart at every culture. Different cultures throughout history and throughout the world had responded in varied ways to the question of the meaning of personal existence. Religion expressed the deepest human aspirations of the individual, it shaped a person's vision of the world and affected that person's relationships with others. Religious freedom, therefore, constituted the very heart of human rights, and the right to religious freedom was based upon the dignity of the human person, for whom acting freely according to the dictates of conscience was an imperative. So long as the requirements of public order were observed, a person's exercise of the right to freedom of religion was not to be curtailed.

47. The right to life and the right to freedom of religion or belief were the basic premises for human existence. It was a sad fact that the right to gather for worship was still denied in many places. Such restrictions contradicted the terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 18 of which stipulated that everyone had the right to freedom of religion, and that the right included freedom to change one's religion or belief. There were still too many cases of religious repression of individuals, families and entire groups.

48. It was his delegation's conviction that recourse to violence in the name of religious belief was a perversion of the basic teachings of the major religions. The Holy See had reaffirmed the message of many religious leaders, that the use of violence could never claim a religious justification, nor foster the growth of true religious feeling. Any strategy whose aim was to quell violence of that sort must insist on the fact that believers had a duty to treat all men and women as brothers and sisters in the one human family, and make it clear that prejudice and enmity had no place in true religion. Believers must be helped to recognize the religious values shared by all.

49. While it was undeniable that there were important differences between religious traditions, those differences should be accepted with humility and respect, in mutual tolerance. Without respect and understanding, civil strife and wars became the order of the day and mutual forgiveness then became

indispensable. The world was scandalized by the sharp divisions that expressed themselves in the destruction of human life. Men and women of faith everywhere were called to make a gift of their spiritual wealth and to share it in a trusting exchange. Such a proposition was not impossible to accept; rather, it was a sure way to peaceful coexistence and human flourishing.

50. **Mr. Osmane** (Algeria) said that the considerable importance taken on by the issue of human rights was a salient aspect of recent developments in international relations. The World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993, an important milestone in those developments, had reaffirmed the universality, interdependence and indivisibility of all human rights and established that economic and social rights were on a par with civil and political rights. Thus, it was a source of satisfaction that the Working Group on the Right to Development had been set up, for it had already become the scene of fruitful and encouraging discussions about taking the demands of the nations of the South seriously.

51. The protection of human rights and the establishment of democracy were long-term processes requiring above all a favourable socio-economic and political climate. Human rights were not the province of any one civilization, but a shared good and a common quest. Therefore, no individual countries could set themselves up as censors in respect of other nations, because those very countries often had much to do vis-à-vis their own citizens and the foreign communities living in their midst. The imposition of political or financial conditions for cooperation or development aid did not serve the cause of human rights and still less the needs of the populace.

52. Even though Algeria had made democratic pluralism and establishing a State guided by the rule of law and a market economy its irrevocable choices, it had borne the full brunt of terrorist barbarity and had had to wage a lonely struggle against medieval doctrines that were alien to the values and traditions of the Algerian people, in order to protect its civilian population and ensure the strict observance of human rights as it combated terrorism. Algeria had never ceased to call for a global mobilization against terrorism, and it continued to strive bilaterally and multilaterally to cut off the terrorist groups once and for all from their international logistical bases.

53. Algeria had ratified most of the international human rights instruments, it was complying with the full range of its treaty obligations and intended to carry on its cooperation and dialogue with the treaty bodies and other United Nations bodies and agencies. The Algerian authorities had encouraged the non-governmental organizations engaged in human rights work to visit the country and monitor the publication of their own reports in Algeria. Furthermore, the President of the Republic had recently set up a National Advisory Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, an independent public institution responsible for looking into all confirmed or reported human rights violations and taking whatever appropriate action was required. The Commission also had a mediating role to play in order to improve relations between the authorities and the citizens. Lastly, out of its concern for a deep-rooted culture of human rights and peace in its society, the Government had introduced a required course in human rights in the primary grades.

54. **Mr. Honningstad** (Norway) said that the terrorist attacks on New York, Washington and other places were attacks on human rights and crimes against humanity. The killing of innocent human beings could never be justified. In such difficult circumstances it was therefore essential to focus on promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. In fighting terrorism and defending fundamental values, it was important to respect human rights.

55. Norway had long been distressed by the widespread violations of human rights in Afghanistan, and was gravely concerned about the current humanitarian crisis in that country. As chairman of the Afghan Support Group in 2002, it would work closely with the United Nations system and other bilateral donors in order to ensure coordination of humanitarian aid and long-term development assistance, with a view to restoring civil society and guaranteeing respect for human rights.

56. However, the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law currently being committed by the Taliban were not the first the country had suffered. For many years, lack of respect for civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights had been the general rule. Women had been excluded from the economic, social and political life of the country and their children had paid the price.

57. The Norwegian Government had long been concerned about the human rights situation in Myanmar, and had appealed for the restoration of democracy, for national reconciliation and for the protection of human rights. He welcomed the talks held between the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the Government of Myanmar. He also welcomed the release of a number of political prisoners, the opening of NLD offices and the resumption of contacts with the International Labour Organization, as well as the efforts made by the United Nations Special Envoy to Myanmar.

58. Norway remained deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Iraq, including the particularly grave and systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It implored the Government of Iraq to initiate reform in order to improve the living conditions of the people, and to cooperate in all respects with the United Nations, in accordance with the Security Council resolutions.

59. Disarming the different rebel groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was a particularly complex challenge, and was critical for the peace process. Norway was concerned to note that, although the peace process was progressing, the human rights abuses were continuing. Some progress had been noted in the areas of the country controlled by the Government, but the Government had not yet suspended the executions as it had promised to do. In the areas controlled by rebel groups, the human rights situation was continuing to deteriorate.

60. In the Sudan, serious violations of human rights were continuing. The situation was especially worrying in Bahr al-Ghazal, where thousands of civilians were affected, as well as in the Nuba mountains and the Western Upper Nile region. The Government should be commended on the release of political prisoners, such as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) leaders, but the bombing of civilian targets in the south must stop, and the necessary steps must be taken to halt the activities of militia groups such as the Murahaleen. Norway appreciated the Government's cooperation with the Special Rapporteur, and would support his continued work in the Sudan. Despite considerable progress in recent years, there were still many problems hampering the development in Cambodia of a peaceful and democratic society, based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. The local elections in

2002 would be an important milestone. Norway hoped that they would be free and fair and without violence.

61. The lack of a functioning and independent judiciary continued to foster social injustice and impunity, and there was an urgent need to implement judicial reform. Norway welcomed the adoption of the law on the tribunal to try the Khmer Rouge, and urged the Government of Cambodia to establish, as soon as possible and in close cooperation with the United Nations, a tribunal that would meet international standards of justice.

62. The Norwegian Government urged the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea to fulfil their commitments according to the Algiers Agreement, and to release prisoners of war and interned civilians. It also wished to express concern over the setbacks regarding the protection of basic human rights in the two countries.

63. The armed conflict in Colombia was inflicting severe suffering on the population. In that situation, it was of paramount importance to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to combat impunity.

64. The Norwegian Government was deeply concerned about the high level of political violence in Zimbabwe and the deteriorating human rights situation in that country, which were impeding the prospects for development. He urged the authorities of Zimbabwe to assume their responsibilities and put an end to the violence and restore respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

65. Norway commended the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its recent efforts to promote the rule of law. Several improvements had taken place in recent years. However, the administration of justice was still unsatisfactory, and it was essential to implement the judicial reform. Furthermore, the restrictions on freedom of expression gave grounds for concern. Respect for human rights for all, including religious minorities such as the Baha'is, was the cornerstone of any democratic society. He called upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to implement the recommendations of the Special Representative and to extend an invitation to him to visit the country.

66. Although Cuba had made remarkable progress in social rights, there had been no significant improvement with regard to civil and political rights.

The restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of association were a particular cause of concern.

67. For many years, Norway had had a constructive and multifaceted dialogue with China on human rights. Over the years, much had been achieved in terms of greater knowledge and mutual understanding. Norway appreciated China's efforts to improve the legal system and the economic and social conditions of its citizens, as well as other measures taken to improve the human rights situation. Despite progress in many areas, there was still room for improvement with regard to the treatment of prisoners and the extensive use of the death penalty, and regarding freedom of speech, religion and association. Moreover, the human rights situation in Tibet still gave cause for concern.

68. **Mr. Manis** (Sudan) said that his country was firmly convinced of the universal, interdependent and inalienable nature of human rights. It considered that the international community could, with all legitimacy, follow the situation of human rights throughout the world, and that it must do so with impartiality, as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had underlined in presenting her report to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session (A/56/36).

69. Alongside global action in the human rights area, it was important that adequate social and legal measures should be taken at the national level to establish a climate conducive to the promotion and protection of human rights. It was in that spirit that the Sudanese Government had continued to act, following the adoption of its Constitution in 1998, by taking a number of legislative measures to guarantee respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. General elections were due shortly to complement those measures. Furthermore, the Constitutional Court had ruled on a number of occasions on questions concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms. In the Sudan there were 33 officially registered political parties, as well as a number of non-registered parties.

70. The Sudan was committed to cooperating with the international human rights mechanisms, and on two occasions in 2001 had received the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Sudan. It had also received a high-level mission on technical requirements in the human rights area, as well as a mission by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Furthermore, the Sudan had

established a national commission for the elimination of the phenomenon of the abduction of women and children in close cooperation with UNICEF and Save the Children (UK). The Sudan had also continued to submit periodic reports to the international human rights mechanisms, and had continued to cooperate with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights.

71. Alongside those human rights initiatives, the Sudanese Government had continued to work towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict which was raging in the south of the country. It hoped for a total ceasefire so that humanitarian aid could reach the deprived populations in the south without hindrance. The Government regarded peace as a strategic option for the country and was engaged in establishing a climate conducive to negotiation with a view to reaching a just and lasting peace. The Sudanese Government had responded favourably to all initiatives undertaken on behalf of peace at the regional level and had tried to propose viable solutions to put an end to the conflict. It considered that it was regrettable that the rebel and terrorist movement which held sway in that part of the country continued to oppose all its efforts with the sole aim of prolonging the state of war. That movement, which lacked all legitimacy, was continuing to perpetrate the most odious crimes against the civilian populations, which it was subjecting to heavy artillery fire and using as a human shield. It also regularly attacked the United Nations and humanitarian personnel. At the very moment when there was a strengthening of cooperation in Africa for a rebirth of the African continent, the Sudan was appealing to the international community to increase its pressure on the rebel movement to respond to peace initiatives.

72. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action had underlined the interdependent, indivisible and inalienable nature of human rights. As for the right to development, the appeals which had been made to the international community to give the necessary attention and support to that legitimate right of developing countries too often remained unheeded. At the Vienna Conference States had been requested not to use human rights as a political weapon to exert pressure on other States. But the economic sanctions imposed on a number of developing countries undermined the fundamental rights of the inhabitants of those countries, particularly the right to health, the right to life, the right to development and the right to

live in decent conditions. The Sudan therefore invited all Member States to declare their opposition to the harmful consequences of such sanctions.

73. At the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, States had collectively made commitments to end the various forms of racism and had embarked on an historical analysis of the injustice and sufferings to which certain people had been subjected in the past. The demand for justice and equity for peoples which had suffered the consequences of racist practices required political initiatives at the national and international levels. Adequate means must be mobilized so that the undertakings given at Durban would become a reality, thereby putting all societies, both rich and poor, on an equal footing.

74. The Sudan supported the establishment, within the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, of an anti-discrimination unit and of a group of five independent experts, one from each region, to follow implementation of the provisions of the Declaration and Programme of Action, and underlined the importance of a balanced geographical representation.

75. Lastly, the Sudan wished to emphasize that when it came to human rights it was important to guard against selectivity and a policy of double standards, in which the focus was only on certain aspects of human rights or on the situation in certain countries. Human rights was a noble cause which must not be used as a tool for imposing political choices. Attacks on human rights spared no country, and it was incumbent upon all to demonstrate a sincere commitment to guaranteeing respect for, and the full exercise of, those rights. Furthermore, it was imperative that all cultures should be respected and that the world should not be divided into two camps, with those who violated human rights on the one side and the philanthropists on the other.

76. **Mr. Navarrete** (Mexico), speaking on agenda item 119 (b), said that his Government recognized that human rights represented a universal value and that it was incumbent on States and the international community as a whole to ensure respect for them. The work of United Nations institutions and mechanisms responsible for promoting and protecting human rights was therefore of great importance.

77. His Government fully agreed with the view expressed in her report by Mrs. Robinson, the United

Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. As she stated, it was more than ever necessary to take initiatives to promote equality, tolerance, respect for human dignity and the primacy of law throughout the world. Those values must be respected by all States, both individually and together.

78. At the international level, Mexico would continue to place the active promotion and protection of human rights at the heart of its foreign policy.

79. As in the past, Mexico would submit to the Committee for consideration two draft resolutions on the role of Member States and of the international community with regard to the human rights of migrants, supporting the work of the Special Rapporteur and emphasizing the need to implement the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

80. It was deeply regrettable that migrants continued to fall victim to violence and to manifestations of racism and xenophobia. The international community must therefore redouble its efforts to ensure the observance and protection of the fundamental rights of millions of people who emigrated to other countries for the sole purpose of improving their living conditions and those of their families.

81. At the national level, the President of Mexico, from his first day in office, had expressed his deep commitment to respect for human rights. The Mexican Government was convinced that democracy and human rights were indissolubly linked. Respect for human rights was a challenge which the Government and society as a whole must meet.

82. The recent release, on humanitarian grounds, of two environmental protesters testified to Mexico's new determination to respect human rights. The decision to open the archives of the bodies responsible for State security, which should help to clarify the human rights situation, both past and present, in Mexico, stemmed from the same determination.

83. The support of the international community was vital if that new determination was to be reflected in practice. A policy of complete openness and close cooperation with the international mechanisms for the protection of human rights was now in effect, so that those mechanisms could observe the situation in the country and contribute to national efforts. That policy

was clearly illustrated by the signing, on 2 December 2000, of a technical cooperation agreement between the Mexican Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The negotiations which had taken place recently between the parties had resulted in a series of initiatives for the launching of the second stage of the agreement and the establishment of the groundwork for broad ongoing collaboration.

84. The High Commissioner had also agreed to the proposal of the Mexican Government that it should set up an office in Mexico; the work of that office would certainly help to achieve the aims of the programme and contribute to follow-up activities. It should be noted that Mexico was one of the few countries which had, of its own accord, invited the Office of the High Commissioner to set up an office in its territory.

85. At the same time, in response to the open-ended invitation to representatives of the international mechanisms for the protection of human rights, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers had visited Mexico. Other visits were planned in 2002.

86. Mexico was also cooperating, at the regional level, with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and, at the international level, with UNESCO.

87. Those activities, which testified to the political determination of the current Government to bring about a radical improvement in the human rights situation, had been overshadowed by the tragic assassination, on 19 February 2001, of Ms. Digna Ochoa, the well-known human rights defender. It was deplorable that such a barbaric act should take place at a time when the will for freedom and justice was so apparent. As Mexico knew, that appalling act was a matter of concern to the international community, as the representative of the European Union had told the Committee that very morning.

88. The President of Mexico had condemned that deplorable act in the strongest terms and had expressed his support for the competent authorities so that an inquiry could be conducted, with due respect for the law, to identify the perpetrators and convict them as they deserved. He had also stated that the Federal Government was determined to give the civil organizations for the protection of human rights all the necessary constitutional guarantees, and to establish a political climate conducive to their activities.

89. In that respect, Mexico hoped shortly to receive a visit from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders, and he extended his invitation to all the representatives of the international mechanisms.

90. *Mr. Oda (Egypt) (Vice-Chairman) took the Chair.*

91. **Mr. Al-Selmi** (Saudi Arabia) referred to the wealth and the great diversity of the human heritage — historical, cultural and religious — and deplored the fact that they were insufficiently taken into account by the institutions responsible for the implementation of the international human rights instruments. Respect for human rights was not the prerogative of any particular civilization. Saudi Arabia was committed to respecting the values and principles on which human dignity was founded and which could not be abrogated or amended on the initiative of a single person or community.

92. The Saudi Arabian Government had acceded to four international human rights instruments and intended to accede shortly to others. It had also responded favourably to requests from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and, more specifically, had contributed to various funds, including the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

93. It had also widely disseminated the fundamental principles of human rights through education and social welfare programmes. Legislation for the protection of citizens' human rights had also been promulgated; it guaranteed freedom of expression and association insofar as they served the interests of the unity of the Saudi Arabian nation and did not undermine the security of the State.

94. While the Saudi Arabians were as a whole of the Islamic faith, freedom of worship was guaranteed for any non-Muslim resident in places of worship designated by the State and in pursuance of article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, such restrictions being essential for the protection of law and order and moral standards.

95. His delegation reaffirmed that only respect for fundamental human values and cooperation among peoples would strengthen peace, equality and

fraternity. Respect for human rights was a collective responsibility and duty, but must in no way serve as a pretext for any interference in the internal affairs of countries. The international community had recently shown that it was capable of assuming its responsibilities, including in the occupied Arab territories. It must present a united front against racial discrimination, ethnic cleansing and any form of attack on religious or other beliefs so as to install a climate of tolerance and fraternity that took account of each people's cultural characteristics.

96. **Mr. Laurin** (Canada), speaking on agenda items 119 (b) and 119 (c), observed that the events of 11 September had led to a rise of fear and intolerance in the world and that the international community had to make a renewed and stronger commitment to the ideals and values expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

97. Canada had not waited for world attention to focus on Afghanistan before it had condemned the Taliban regime, its oppression of women and girls and its policy of repression resulting in widespread suffering and displacement. The international community must do all it could to help the Afghan people find a way forward.

98. Canada was concerned about the Iraqi Government's complete disregard for the human rights and dignity of its citizens and urged it to end its many human rights violations and allow the Special Rapporteur to carry out his mission.

99. The Canadian Government encouraged States to follow up on the commitments they had undertaken in Durban at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Noting, in particular, the harsh treatment in Myanmar of ethnic minorities and the inhabitants of border regions, he said his delegation remained concerned about that country's poor human rights situation. However, he welcomed the progress made over the past year in efforts towards the restoration of democracy and political freedom, as well as the visits of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights and a high-level ILO team. Myanmar must now release all political prisoners and address the problem of forced labour.

100. The Governments of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo should endeavour to protect the rights of ethnic minorities, displaced

persons and returning refugees. The participation of all Kosovars in the democratic election on 17 November would be a major step towards restoring stability.

101. While the progress in the inter-Congolese dialogue for the return of democracy deserved recognition, ceasefire violations, the overflow of the conflict into neighbouring countries, and human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo gave grave cause for concern. All foreign troops should leave the country, and refugees and displaced persons should be able to return home. In the belief that only in those circumstances could peace be installed in the African Great Lakes region, his Government had sent a special envoy to that region.

102. While the absence of a ceasefire in Burundi, as well as the abuses against civilians, and the use of torture by the security forces were to be deplored, the district elections in Rwanda and the selection of judges taking part in the people's courts were encouraging, although restrictions had been placed on opposition activities. The Rwandan Government must create an auspicious environment for the smooth conduct of the 2002 presidential elections.

103. Canada deplored the human rights situation in Togo and had been disappointed by the postponement of the legislative elections.

104. Increased political tension in Haiti in the wake of the 2000 elections had put pressure on the police and the judiciary. The Haitian Government must combat the impunity which those services enjoyed and ensure their independence and effectiveness in order to strengthen the people's confidence in the future of democracy.

105. Canada welcomed the progress of religious freedoms in Viet Nam and believed that the Government should strengthen them further. It should also expand political freedoms and review the treatment of ethnic groups. It was to be hoped that the National Assembly elections in 2002 would offer an opportunity for political dialogue.

106. In Iran, the re-election of President Khatami was in stark contrast to the steady deterioration of human rights and the acts of discrimination against religious minorities such as the Baha'i. The Government must allow the Special Representative to fulfil his mandate, must continue its reforms and must respect the rights of all its citizens.

107. The efforts made by the Government of Pakistan to develop long-term and fundamental reforms for the establishment of democracy, and particularly the creation of a National Commission on the Status of Women, the fight against corruption and for freedom of information and the adoption of legislation for the elimination of child labour, were to be commended. However, more needed to be done in the area of the protection of religious minorities.

108. Freedom of expression and opinion was the cornerstone of a free and democratic society and must be respected in order to avoid misunderstandings, divisions along ethnic or religious lines and conflicts and human rights violations.

109. China was continuing its efforts to modernize its legal system and raise the standard of living of its population, and that was a welcome development. Its ratification of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, despite the accompanying reservation, was a step in the right direction. China must now apply the Covenant and must ratify and implement the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. However, the obstacles to freedom of expression, association and religion, particularly in Tibet and Xinjiang, the application of the death penalty for non-violent crimes and the harsh sentencing of dissidents were a source of concern.

110. Cuba continued to use temporary detention and harassment to suppress non-violent dissent. It must open greater space for freedom of opinion and expression and expand dialogue with the Church and civil society if it wished to fulfil its international commitments in the area of human rights.

111. Although Canada welcomed the signing of a peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, it was concerned about the lack of freedom of expression in Eritrea and the ill-treatment allegedly suffered by various ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Eritrea must continue its collaboration with NGOs and support the holding of free multiparty elections in December 2001, and Ethiopia must promote the rights of the human person.

112. By its accelerated land reform programme, the Government of Zimbabwe was continuing to undermine the rule of law. It was not providing protection to all citizens, was intimidating the media and condoning acts of violence.

113. Canada welcomed the recent adoption in Saudi Arabia of new legislation on the rights of defendants but remained concerned about the executions and corporal punishment. The Saudi Arabian Government must respect the commitments it had assumed with regard to human rights and administer justice in the light of them.

114. The Canadian Government supported Colombia's efforts to find a negotiated solution to the conflict, but was concerned about the continued lack of respect for the most basic principles of human rights and international humanitarian law. The signature of the comprehensive agreement on the respect of those rights proposed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights would be welcome. In addition, those responsible for human rights violations should be brought to justice.

115. The ongoing conflict in the Sudan was a matter for concern. The two sides were using non-accountable militias and restricting access by humanitarian aid agencies. The Government was engaging in indiscriminate and repeated bombing. In addition, since certain regions of the country had abundant natural resources, business enterprises in the Sudan must ensure that their activities were not increasing the suffering of the civilian population.

116. In the Middle East, the Palestinian Authority and Israel must refrain from inflaming the situation further and must pursue dialogue. The top priority should be the safety, security, human rights and well-being of the populations. Respect for the human dignity of all was a fundamental building block in the establishment of a sustainable peace.

117. The two opposing sides in Sri Lanka were continuing to commit human rights violations and were making no progress towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict affecting that country. Consequently, it was the duty of the Government to bring to justice the persons responsible for those violations.

118. Canada urged all countries to cooperate with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and, in that connection, believed that the trial of Mr. Milosevic was a triumph of the fight against impunity.

119. The adoption in Cambodia of legislation establishing a tribunal that would address war crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge was also welcome. The Cambodian Government must now ensure that the

commune elections in 2002 were properly conducted and must assist the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in carrying out his mandate.

120. In Sierra Leone, the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the progress made in setting up a special court were welcome, but Canada remained concerned by the regional tensions and their impact on the human rights situation and on the humanitarian crisis in the Mano River region.

121. He took note of the adoption by the President of Indonesia of a decree broadening the scope of the investigations into human rights abuses in East Timor. However, a special tribunal should be constituted to prosecute the perpetrators of the violations. While he welcomed the commitment to pursue democratic reform, the violence in Aceh, the tension in Irian Jaya and the detentions in those two provinces gave cause for concern, as did the plight of some one million people who had been internally displaced.

122. His delegation was concerned by the human rights violations committed against civilians in Chechnya by the parties to the conflict, and called for an investigation into the violations. He welcomed the progress made in that regard, the moves by the Russian authorities to improve access for the humanitarian community working in Chechnya, and the efforts by the two sides to reach a lasting political settlement.

123. The human rights record of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was disquieting, but since the restoration of diplomatic relations in February 2001 his Government had continued its dialogue with that country on areas of mutual interest, and welcomed its willingness to engage on human rights.

124. To build and maintain peace, the culture of impunity must be replaced by a culture of accountability. Although no country in the world was beyond criticism for its human rights record, the international community must today more than ever maintain its commitment to human rights.

125. **Mr. Parshikov** (Russian Federation) said that the events of 11 September, by demonstrating that terrorism flouted moral standards and paid no heed to borders between States and continents, had compelled individuals and countries to change their view of the world. The President of the Russian Federation had stated that terrorists, in forming part of an international

criminal network, threatened every society in the world.

126. While past iniquitous and unrealistic practices had prevented States from identifying and averting emerging threats, the tragedies that had occurred in New York, Moscow and other cities throughout the world had put a full stop to the disputes between States on the question of terrorism. It was now clear that terrorism was the most odious and flagrant violation of human rights.

127. The Security Council, in its resolution 1373 (2001), had declared that acts, methods, and practices of terrorism were contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, which encompassed respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The international machinery for the protection of such rights was no longer able to respond to today's challenges. Accordingly, he invited all States to work to protect universal rights against terrorism, and to begin by strengthening human rights instruments. Further, he called upon the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as a priority, to make good the current deficiencies in the fight against terrorism; efforts to combat the impunity of those who committed flagrant human rights violations must also target those guilty of acts of terrorism.

128. He recalled that for some years the world had viewed with concern developments in Afghanistan arising from the policies followed by the Taliban, which had made the country the centre for international terrorism and illicit trafficking in drugs and the symbol of the negation of human rights and human dignity. The report on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan (A/56/409) described the many acts of violence committed by the Taliban; the acts perpetrated by fanatics would not go unpunished.

129. The declaration issued at the conclusion of the meeting between the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, held at Dushanbe on 22 October 2001, had emphasized that the formation of an anti-terrorist coalition, with the extradition of those who had facilitated or organized the terrorist attacks of 11 September, the elimination of the Taliban regime, which sheltered terrorist groups, and the dissolution and disarmament of armed groups were preconditions for a political transition in Afghanistan. In that regard the future of the country rested in the formation of a

government representing all ethnic groups and guaranteeing freedom of expression to all.

130. The report on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance (A/56/253) stated that the religious intolerance evinced by the Taliban had extremely serious consequences. He called upon all religious officials to unequivocally condemn fanaticism and extremism. The President of the Russian Federation had supported an initiative to organize an international conference in Moscow on the role of Islam in the fight against terrorism.

131. He noted that his country was concerned by the human rights situation in certain Baltic States, where the Russian population was refused citizenship and could not exercise its political, economic or social rights, and in other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), where the use of the Russian language was limited and where Russians faced difficulties in participating in public affairs.

132. One could not speak of democratic ideals and civil liberties amid the kind of poverty that prevailed at present, even if for some people globalization was a panacea for putting an end to all social evils. Most of the world's peoples stood to gain nothing from the benefits of globalization, which tended to increase tension and cultural isolation. Only international cooperation for social and economic development, not political violence and public condemnation, could help to overcome that isolation. Democracy had been shown to be the product of education for all, industrialization, the creation of a middle class and the development of means of communication. It would only become universal if development itself was universal. The Millennium Declaration stated clearly that the central challenge of the times was to ensure that globalization became a positive force for all the world's peoples.

133. In conclusion, he emphasized that globalization was not based on a single model, but on a whole range of ideas and on dialogue. The Charter of the United Nations guaranteed freedom of expression and equal rights for all States. His country would like to see the issues of democracy and human rights become a unifying rather than a divisive factor within the international community, with States making joint decisions to solve the difficult problems of the time.

134. **Ms. Amadei** (European Community), speaking on agenda item 119 (b), said she wished to share with the Committee some of the reforms which had recently

been introduced by the European Commission in order to ensure the effective implementation of the policy of the European Union in the field of human rights. With regard to the role of the European Union in promoting human rights and democratization in third countries, lines of contact between the various European Union institutions were being strengthened in order to harmonize the Community's approach to human rights. The European Union recognized the vital role of civil society in holding governments to account, as well as the role of non-governmental organizations, and it arranged regular discussion forums with the European Commission, supplemented by informal contacts at all levels. For example, a round of informal consultations had recently taken place in Brussels concerning the use of resources under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

135. The European Union had made a clear commitment to improve existing dialogue with third countries. The human rights clause, which had been systematically included in all agreements concluded by the European Community since 1995, made human rights an essential element of those agreements. The Cotonou Agreement, concluded in June 2000 with the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, provided for a refined consultation process to be invoked if the human rights element of the Agreement was violated.

136. The European Union's assistance programmes, backed up by country strategy papers, took due account of human rights issues. The European Community maintained a diplomatic presence in over 120 countries, thus ensuring that assistance would be effective and geared to local needs. Since resources were limited, they should be focused as effectively as possible. To that end, support given under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights was targeted to four key themes: support to strengthen democratization, good governance and the rule of law; abolition of the death penalty; support for the fight against torture and impunity and for international criminal tribunals; and the fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination against minorities and indigenous people. For the sake of greater effectiveness, support would be limited to a certain number of target countries, selected after consultations with States members of the European Union and with a view to maintaining geographical balance. That limitation applied only to the budget lines of the

Initiative and in no way diminished the importance of activities relating to human rights and democracy funded through other European Union instruments. Moreover, certain key themes such as gender equality and children's rights would be included in all the projects supported by the Initiative.

137. Measures had been taken by the European Union to support the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including the provision of over 5 million euros in 2000 in assistance for projects run by the Office. Future avenues for cooperation between the European Union and the Office of the High Commissioner were currently under discussion.

138. Developments with respect to the contribution of the European Commission in the field of human rights reflected its aim of reinvigorating the performance of the European Union in that field and reinforcing its relationship with third countries, regional and international organizations, and civil society. Only by refining its approach could the European Union play a more active part in international efforts to advance human rights and democratic values.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.