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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Thirty-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 858th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 29 January 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

CONTENTS

OTHER MATTERS

Meeting with States parties

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

OTHER MATTERS (agenda item 9)

Meeting with States parties

1. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Committee to hear the comments of representatives of States parties on its activities and all aspects of its work, including the increase in membership from 10 to 18 and ways of improving the human rights treaty body reporting system.
2. The Committee had been very effective. At the current session it had considered nine country reports; it had also adopted two general comments and was working on three others. In drafting those general comments the Committee had enjoyed the crucial support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Committee also maintained productive relations with other specialized agencies and with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
3. The workload was growing; in 2004 the Committee expected to receive the first reports under the two Optional Protocols, and must determine how to deal with those reports, which could not be considered in the same way as the reports submitted under article 44 of the Convention. The Committee was also revising its guidelines for periodic reports.
4. The Committee was concerned about follow-up to its recommendations. Although States parties were implementing them, those efforts must be intensified.
5. By increasing its composition from 10 members to 18, it was hoped that the Committee would be able to consider an average of nine reports per session instead of the current six. That was expected to reduce the backlog.
6. Mr. SMITH (Australia) expressed appreciation to the Committee for holding the meeting with States parties; it would help them to understand how the Committee worked and help the Committee to understand the viewpoint of States parties.
7. Australia had held several workshops on improving treaty body procedures and promoting the interaction of treaty bodies among themselves and with States parties. It was encouraging that treaty bodies had been seeking to address their problems and that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had been working proactively in that area.
8. He would like to know whether the Committee had found the meetings of chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies useful, whether it had changed its working methods and its approach to certain questions as a result of those meetings, and whether a sense of "best practice" was developing.
9. In view of the imminent increase in its membership, he enquired whether the Committee envisaged making use of subcommittees in order to be able to complete its consideration of a larger number of country reports. The increase in membership might actually slow down the

work, since everyone would want to have their say. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387), he sought the Committee's view of the suggestion that States parties should produce a single consolidated report on their overall human rights performance.

10. Ms. KENT (Canada) commended the Committee for its initiative to meet with States parties and hoped that such meetings would become a feature of its work. Her Government regarded the treaty body system as central to United Nations endeavours to ensure respect for and enjoyment of human rights. She welcomed the meetings of chairpersons of treaty bodies and, like the representative of Australia, would like to know whether best practices were emerging.

11. Canada attached great importance to eliminating the backlog of reports of States parties. She asked how the expanded Committee would tackle that problem and stressed the need to ensure that treaty bodies were properly funded.

12. Mr. SARAN (India) said that he, too, welcomed the opportunity for interaction with the Committee. Thought must be given to the impact of consolidated reporting and the increase in the Committee's membership on its work. He welcomed the meetings of chairpersons of treaty bodies. The backlog problem also needed to be addressed.

13. Ms. DEMOSTER (New Zealand) said she hoped that meetings with States parties would become an annual event. She asked how the measures which the Committee had already taken to improve its working methods had been functioning in practice and what the response of States parties had been. She welcomed the recommendation that the length of periodic reports should be reduced, the suggestion that overdue reports should be combined in order to bring States parties' reporting up to date, and the request that States parties should respond directly to the Committee's concluding observations, which were very useful in preparing subsequent reports and contributed to constructive monitoring of implementation of the Convention.

14. Mr. CHUMAREV (Russian Federation) said that with its new composition of 18 members the Committee would need to change its working methods, but it must first decide on its future composition, taking into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution and the number of seats to be set aside for each regional group. If the Committee was to be credible all regional groups, cultures and legal systems must be represented.

15. Mr. CONTICELLI (Italy) said that follow-up to concluding observations was a central issue for all committees, and he was eager to know how the Committee intended to address it. He welcomed the increase in the Committee's membership, but cautioned that it might have an adverse impact as more members would want to speak. In that connection the Committee, in a division of labour, might establish a subcommittee. The idea of a consolidated report was appealing, but might pose organizational problems. The various treaty bodies met at different times, and it was not clear how they could all consider the same consolidated report. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and States parties should conduct a feasibility study.

16. Mr. van der KWAST (Netherlands) said that he would endorse a division of labour once the Committee's membership had risen to 18. Consideration should be given to limiting the length of statements.

17. Press releases issued following consideration of reports of States parties sometimes contained factual inaccuracies. That reflected badly on the reporting State and the Committee itself. It would be difficult to persuade officials from ministries to attend the Committee's meetings if they were then misquoted on sensitive issues, which in turn led to questions being asked in national parliaments.

18. Mr. BENTALL (United Kingdom) commended the Committee for leading the way in its dialogue with States parties. He enquired about developments concerning the meetings of the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies, the Inter-Committee meeting of the human rights treaty bodies held in 2002, and plans for future meetings.

19. It was important to discuss ways of improving cooperation between committees. To cite one example, the Committee had just produced a General Comment on the role of independent national human rights institutions (CRC/GC/2002/2). While that was an important issue for the Committee, it was equally important for all treaty bodies; it might have been better for a general comment to have been produced by the entire treaty body system rather than by just one committee, which gave the impression that national human rights institutions were an issue only in the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

20. On the question of a consolidated report, he saw some benefits for the workload of States parties that lacked resources, but its drawback was that a long report covering all a State party's obligations might be so unwieldy as to create more problems than it solved, whereas a short, superficial report might not be sufficient to allow the treaty bodies to have a credible dialogue with States parties. Nor was it clear whether it was possible to have a consolidated report without amending the treaties. Although his Government had not yet adopted a position on the question, its initial preference was to rationalize existing structures; the treaty bodies should ask for more focused reports and more concise information on a few key issues and should also look at cross-referencing data which had already been supplied to individual treaty bodies. A single consolidated report on all obligations under the six treaties would quickly become out of date, and thus the third or fourth treaty body looking at the report would want it to be updated by the State party, which would then need to prepare a new report for that committee.

21. Once the Committee's membership increased to 18, it would become more important for a time limit to be placed on questions by members. Repetitive questions bedevilled the work of all committees. The Committee should lay down organizational rules before its membership increased. He did not think that creating a subcommittee would be an effective use of resources; indeed, it was likely to increase strain on existing limited resources and make a larger secretariat necessary.

22. On an issue which NGOs had asked him to raise, he enquired whether the concluding observations could be worded in a more child-friendly manner.

23. Mr. LOUFTY (Egypt) said that the proposal for a consolidated report was an interesting idea. But the representative of the United Kingdom had rightly referred to practical difficulties which would arise because States parties, conventions and obligations were different and the dates of the sessions of each committee differed. It might be preferable for States parties to produce short, focused periodic reports rather than a single lengthy one on their obligations under all the human rights treaty bodies. With regard to the suggestion that the Committee should create a subcommittee, he noted that the Human Rights Committee already had a system of working groups on specific issues.
24. Mr. PEÑA GHISLENI (Brazil) said that the introduction of consolidated reports would increase the likelihood of reporting delays, since the late completion of just one section would delay submission of the whole report. He asked how many reports were overdue and how many had been submitted to the Committee but not yet considered, and whether the Committee had decided how to proceed with regard to long overdue reports.
25. Ms. NASCIMBENE DE DUMONT (Argentina) said it was difficult for States parties to ensure the necessary follow-up to reports when they had to wait so long between submitting the report and taking part in the dialogue with the Committee. Her delegation was considering with interest the introduction of consolidated reports given the duplication of work that arose in submitting a separate report to each treaty monitoring body. The proposal for reports to be more focused was attractive in theory, but very difficult to put into practice. Reports that restricted themselves to matters arising from concluding observations could be just as long as those prepared under the current arrangements. The enlargement of the Committee to a membership of 18 provided a welcome opportunity to restore the principle of equitable geographic representation, which should be respected in any working groups or subcommittees established.
26. Mr. KEBBON (Sweden) said it would be useful to hear how the Committee felt the increase in membership would affect its working methods, and what the cost implications would be.
27. Mr. ETZER (Haiti) said that the consideration of reports of States parties would be more fruitful if dialogue with the Committee was a more constructive process. For instance, States that did not have the capacity to implement the Convention fully should receive assistance instead of being set impossible challenges.
28. Mr. FERRER RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba) said that he hoped that a meeting with States parties would become an annual event. With a view to reducing the number of overdue reports, States parties with overdue reports should be allowed to combine two periodic reports. He drew attention to the problem of delays between the submission of reports and their consideration by the Committee. As a result States parties were required to submit a second document containing updated information, which added to the burden.
29. Lists of issues should be sent to delegations well in advance of meetings so that there was enough time to prepare replies carefully, and should avoid going over details already dealt with in the report. Every member of the Committee should be involved in the consideration of each report, a principle that might be undermined by the introduction of working groups. Concluding

observations should avoid making unrealistic demands and should take full account of religious and cultural factors. The introduction of consolidated reports would pose legal difficulties, by requiring amendments to treaties, as well as practical problems, by inviting States parties not to respond to the specificities of each convention. It would also be an onerous task for any Government to compile such a report. As an alternative, States could submit one consolidated report covering issues common to all human rights treaties, followed by written replies to specific questions by each committee.

30. The CHAIRPERSON said that 174 initial reports, 69 second periodic reports and 2 third periodic reports had been received, while 18 initial reports, 114 second reports and 70 third reports were still overdue. A total of 50 reports had been received by the Committee but still awaited consideration, a backlog which, as matters stood, would take two years to clear. It was difficult to persuade States parties to submit overdue second and third periodic reports when the Committee did not have the capacity to consider them, at least within the next two or three years. Many situations had arisen whereby, owing to delays, States parties were required to submit a second periodic report only a year after their initial report had been considered. In such cases the Committee would allow States to combine their second and third periodic reports provided they complied with reporting obligations in future.

31. He stressed that all Committee members took their responsibilities very seriously in respect of every country report, as evidenced by the questions they raised. The appointment of country rapporteurs was done on an informal basis, taking the specialist knowledge of each Committee member into account. At the end of each session the Committee sent lists of issues to the States parties whose reports were due to be considered at the following session. That process helped delegations to prepare in a focused manner for meetings with the Committee. In his view there was no practical way of making that arrangement any more efficient.

32. In its concluding observations on second and third periodic reports the Committee intended to make recommendations concerning all aspects of the Convention in order to avoid the misunderstanding that there were no problems at all in certain areas. However, it was unrealistic to seek full compliance with every recommendation in the space of just five years. There was a need to focus on priority areas.

33. Ms. KHATTAB said that the increased membership of the Committee would allow it to devote more time to issues other than the consideration of reports of States parties. Furthermore, it would allow it to maintain a more sustained relationship with the Geneva Missions of States parties. In order to ensure that press releases provided an accurate account of meetings, country rapporteurs could be called upon to review each release before issuance. She noted the concerns raised with regard to the proposed introduction of consolidated reports. However, States parties should bear in mind the efficiency gains of a consolidated preparatory process, together with the advantages of a single set of concluding observations concerning a country's overall human rights performance.

34. Mr. CITARELLA said that the increase in the number of members had the great advantage that it would provide an opportunity for wider geographical representation, enabling the Committee to benefit from contributions from various different systems, whether legal, cultural or social, as well as providing a wider balance of views. On the other hand, the financial

difficulties facing the United Nations constituted a significant obstacle to the ideal way of reorganizing the Committee's work, namely that two chambers should be set up, structured in such a way that more reports could be considered. The United Nations, and particularly the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, lacked the financial resources to introduce such a system, at least in the short term, given that expenditure on translation, interpretation and secretariat support - not to mention the expenses of Committee members themselves - could well double.

35. In the absence of two chambers there would be practical difficulties confronting an 18-member Committee: all members would be able to express their views only if the number or length of sessions was increased or if a time limit of, say, five minutes was imposed on statements.

36. One advantage of a larger Committee, however, was that country reports could be scrutinized not by one country rapporteur but by a working group of two or three members, which would result in a better balance of views. As for the possibility of consolidated reports addressed to all six human rights treaty bodies, difficulties would arise in connection with the different time limits imposed by each treaty body and the different relation that each State party had with each body, as well as the fact that compiling such a report would mean much more work for the State concerned. The most basic question was what happened to a report once it was submitted. Each treaty body could consider only the concerns relating to it, but that approach carried its own risks. The most effective approach might be the establishment of a single body overseeing all the human rights treaties, with different chambers considering a given group of issues, but, for the time being, that variant was not realistic. He suggested that a feasibility study should be carried out as soon as possible in order to weigh up the positive and negative implications of consolidated reports both for States parties and for the treaty bodies.

37. The CHAIRPERSON paid tribute to the positive atmosphere that obtained among the current membership of the Committee, with its wide range of expertise, its commitment and its willingness to work for consensus, even when individual members' views diverged widely. He hoped that an 18-person Committee would have the same team spirit as the 10-member one. The huge expansion of the Committee was unique in United Nations history, but it provided States with a good opportunity to address the question of geographical distribution, although, in the interest of retaining the expertise currently available, he would recommend that all the existing members should be re-elected. That would, however, leave nine more vacancies, which could be filled by two members from each of the underrepresented groups, plus one more.

38. With regard to the practical implications of the expansion of the membership, he said that a meeting with the High Commissioner would be held to introduce new members to the Committee's working methods, to discuss such issues as the role of the country rapporteur and, above all, to create a good team from the outset. He gave notice, however, that an enlarged Committee did not mean that more reports would be processed: the time allotted to each country had already been reduced from nine hours to six and no further reduction was possible. Nor was more than three months of meeting time (during which 27 country reports could be considered) feasible: as it was, members were hard pushed to find the time, particularly in view of the

demanding work involved in reading around the reports. On the other hand, the enlarged Committee would have more time for the drafting of general comments, which was currently difficult to fit into the schedule; and it would be easier to cover for members absent through illness.

39. The only way that he could see to get rid of the Committee's existing backlog was to institute parallel chambers. The drawback, of course, was the extra expenditure involved - unless the Committee resorted to the unsatisfactory expedient of responding to reports in writing - because of the requirement for more secretariat support and increased travel expenses, as well as the probable need to extend interpretation beyond the French and English currently in use; Spanish, at least, was likely to be added. The parallel chambers might not need to be introduced on a permanent basis: five sessions might be enough to eliminate the backlog. Two chambers, however, could not do double the work of one, since all Committee members were needed to draft the concluding observations. Each chamber could not process nine reports per session but it might be able to manage seven. He stressed that his remarks did not apply to what might be considered an acceptable, permanent backlog of 9-12 months, arising from the purely logistical consideration that reports needed to be translated, processed and considered first at a pre-session meeting and later at the session itself.

40. Decisions would also need to be made about attendance at pre-session meetings; not all members attended, but it was to be hoped - although the decision must ultimately rest with the new, 18-member Committee - that the next pre-session meeting would be attended by all members.

41. Lastly, he said that much depended on the budgetary situation. Resources were currently not available and would need to be found. There was, however, some room for eventual economies: it might be possible to reduce the number of sessions from three to two, inasmuch as the Committee could, by operating in parallel chambers, consider up to 16 country reports per session, or a total of 32 per year, which was 5 more than was currently achieved. He suggested, however, that the new Committee would probably need to meet at least three times - in May and September 2003 and January 2004 - before it could take the step of reconstituting itself as two chambers.

42. Ms. KARP said that, whether or not two chambers were established, the Committee would need increased secretariat support for such tasks as writing country analyses. She had no complaint about the current quality of support, but increased quantity would also be necessary, otherwise it would be impossible for the Committee to deal with more reports. For her, one crucial question was what expectations delegations had of the Committee and how they viewed the prospect of two chambers. In her view participation of all members in dialogue with the country under consideration was important, but, on the other hand, an enlarged membership would free some members to work on general comments or on other procedures. Moreover, it would be most time-consuming if all 18 members put questions. She wondered whether States parties envisaged the full Committee attending every meeting.

43. What she wished to avoid was that the Committee should be regarded purely as a technical Committee expected to churn out a given quantity of work in order to justify its existence. The Committee was not and could not be purely technical: it was concerned quite as

much with process as with procedures. It sought to establish countries' policies on such matters as how human rights education was conducted, how children's rights were promoted and what measures States should take to implement the Convention. At the same time, it wished to learn about the real situation in the country and about the participation of NGOs and other members of civil society. A dialogue was therefore essential if mutual understanding was to be achieved.

44. With regard to the question of consolidated reports, she said that, when delegations appeared before the Committee, they were sometimes asked how they had implemented the concluding observations on issues relevant to the Committee's work delivered by other human rights treaty bodies, but were often unable to answer. The need was therefore more for consolidated knowledge than for consolidated reports.

45. Ms. OUEDRAOGO said, with reference to geographical distribution, that it would be useful for States if the Committee had a fixed quota: the non-representation of certain regions could lead to a misunderstanding by the Committee of the situation in a given country. As for the question of following up a country's progress, she was all in favour: shortcomings could be rectified and States could be helped to take a critical look at themselves. Such a procedure, however, required an appropriate structure.

46. She shared her colleagues' wish to know how States viewed the role of the enlarged Committee. The enlargement had been ratified by States, so they must have had some aim in mind. In her view, the Committee could benefit from an even wider range of expertise, since the Convention covered many fields. She also wondered why States often failed to participate actively in the discussion days organized by the Committee. In that connection, she asked whether recommendations emerging from such discussion days - or, for that matter, general comments - were conveyed to people involved in implementing the Convention in the participants' countries. She welcomed the meeting with States parties, which would help the Committee improve its own performance and thus achieve its ultimate goal of promoting the Convention throughout the world.

47. As for the issue of consolidated reports, she was fully aware - coming, as she did, from a developing country herself - of the problems faced by poorer States in drafting a single report: it involved extensive work in the field. To draft a report to be submitted to six bodies simultaneously might be beyond their powers. She hoped that, when the matter was discussed in New York, the developing countries would express their views. The Committee's main concern was that the relevant aspects of a country's policies should not be obscured; and there was a risk that a consolidated report would go into less detail on each individual concern. She supported the suggestion that a feasibility study should be conducted, especially if a better way could be found of structuring consolidated reports.

48. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said she was in favour of consolidated reporting, inter alia because it would help to mainstream human rights issues at the national level. Many of the problems that would arise when preparing a consolidated report could be overcome if a central database was used and regularly updated. How consolidated reports would be submitted to the different treaty bodies required clarification given that each body had its own timetable for receiving reports.

49. The CHAIRPERSON said that the annual meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies had the potential to be a useful instrument; however, more effort should be made to follow up the ideas raised at each meeting. The treaty bodies had demonstrated that they were willing to work together, yet they continued to operate as individual and separate organs. The meeting could play an important role in the development of a more harmonized system of human rights assessment and the improvement of inter-committee cooperation. He hoped that the treaty bodies would soon be able to issue joint general comments. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights was planning to hold an inter-committee meeting in 2003 to discuss those issues. Consolidated reporting was far from being an easy solution and he had some reservations about whether it was the best way forward. It was essential to start discussing the issue and to conduct a feasibility study as soon as possible.

50. Mr. KAVADZE (Georgia) said he welcomed the discussion and hoped that such a meeting would be held on an annual basis. He regretted that no clear answers had been given regarding the geographical distribution of the Committee's membership. He expressed concern that Eastern Europe would not be fairly represented when the membership of the Committee was increased to 18, as it was very difficult to ensure equitable geographical representation in practice.

51. The CHAIRPERSON said that it was the responsibility of States parties to ensure equitable geographical representation when voting for the members of the Committee.

52. Mr. van der KWAST (Netherlands) said he would like to learn more about the possibility of holding simultaneous meetings in separate chambers and whether any steps had been taken to introduce such a change. For example, had any efforts been made to determine the cost of such an undertaking? He wondered how States parties would be affected. He welcomed the suggestion made by Ms. Khattab to solve the problem of inaccurate press releases. He would be interested to know the views of the other members of the Committee in that regard. Had any measures already been adopted to address that long-standing problem?

53. Ms. DEMOSTER (New Zealand) urged the Committee to find a pragmatic way to avoid duplication in the reports submitted to different treaty bodies; duplication posed a serious logistical problem for small and developing countries. While she appreciated that there were many difficulties surrounding the concept of consolidated reporting, it was high time to find solutions to the current problems. With regard to the suggested interim measures to reduce the backlog of reports, she said that New Zealand would be electing members who would be able to provide an equitable input in terms of geography, gender and expertise; it was preferable, therefore, that all 18 members should participate in the consideration of each State party report.

54. Ms. GRAMBYE (Denmark) said she had some reservations about whether consolidated reporting was the most effective way of addressing the problem of non-reporting. Other treaty bodies had found various solutions to the problem; for example, the Human Rights Committee had held discussions with States parties in the absence of a report. Had the Committee considered any such alternatives? The treaty bodies should consider the introduction of a coordinated reporting cycle and the streamlining of working methods. In its concluding

observations, the Committee should endeavour to provide States parties with more guidance on how to prepare focused reports in future and how to follow up on recommendations. States parties should also be encouraged to seek technical cooperation to help with those matters.

55. Mr. VIGNY (Switzerland) said that Switzerland had voted in favour of increasing the Committee's membership in an attempt to reduce the backlog. It did not wish its reports to be considered by 18 members; consideration by 9 or 10 members would suffice. However, it was important that there should be a balance among those members in terms of geographical distribution and expertise. He acknowledged that it would be difficult, in reality, to have a quota of members drawn from certain geographical regions; in any case, the expertise and independence of Committee members were equally important.

56. Switzerland was in favour of consolidated reporting. The fact that a number of different authorities in Switzerland shared reporting responsibilities posed an obstacle; however, it was hoped that work would soon begin on creating a central database that would facilitate the task of compiling a consolidated report. The introduction of consolidated reporting would not require a revision of any of the human rights treaties. He supported the approach taken by the Committee when dealing with seriously overdue reports; the Committee was obliged to take extreme measures if States parties did not fulfil their reporting obligations. The Committee should make more of an effort to ensure follow-up to its concluding observations. Lastly, with regard to the inaccuracy of the press releases, he said that Switzerland was in favour of any solution that respected the freedom of the press.

57. Mr. MARTÍNEZ (Mexico) said that it was important to take an innovative approach towards the reorganization of the internal structure of the Committee. He had serious misgivings about the concept of consolidated reporting, which could give rise to a number of complications. The practice of submitting separate reports encouraged Governments to respond to the specific requirements of each committee and to focus on specific systems of protection. Mexico attached great importance to equitable geographical representation in the Committee, which should comprise experts who were familiar with the situation in particular regions. As any efforts to improve the working methods of the Committee would have financial repercussions, he asked whether the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights could provide more support.

58. Ms. IAMSUDHA (Thailand) said that, in order to strengthen the Committee, more serious consideration should be given to the question of geographical representation, even if it was not possible to introduce a quota. Thailand was in favour of introducing two parallel chambers if that would help to reduce the backlog in the Committee's work. However, the Committee should ensure that there was equitable geographical representation and expertise in both chambers. Although requesting technical cooperation was a lengthy and complicated process, technical cooperation and financial support would be of great help to many countries that were unable to meet their reporting or follow-up obligations. She urged the Chairperson to raise the issue at the next inter-committee meeting.

59. Mr. ETZER (Haiti) said that the responsibility for ensuring equitable geographical representation in the Committee lay with the States parties. The issue should have been raised before the adoption of the resolution that increased the membership of the Committee. It was now too late. The only way to guarantee fair geographical representation would be to adopt another resolution.

60. Ms. BETTON (Jamaica) said she supported the comments made by the representative of Thailand with regard to the need for technical cooperation. Such cooperation would help small States like Jamaica to meet their reporting obligations. Discussions should be held with other treaty bodies so that efforts in that field could be coordinated. Referring to the comments made by the representative of Switzerland, she said that instead of adopting extreme measures against non-reporting States, the Committee should give due consideration to the reasons behind the absence of a report, which could include a lack of resources or expertise.

61. The CHAIRPERSON said he had taken note of the comments raised in connection with technical assistance. He pointed out that the Committee had some advantages over other treaty bodies, in that the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was very active in providing technical assistance and other support to help developing countries prepare and submit their reports.

62. Ms. IZE-CHARRIN (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) said, regarding the cost of holding meetings in dual chambers, that the Secretariat had submitted a request to conference services for additional meetings at no extra cost. With regard to follow-up to concluding observations, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had recently organized a workshop in Quito on follow-up to the concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee, and intended to hold similar workshops for the other treaty bodies. Voluntary funding for those activities would be welcome.

63. The CHAIRPERSON said that the question of inaccurate press releases had been discussed at the annual meeting of chairpersons. The Committee was aware of the problem and had discussed the possibility of involving the country rapporteurs. However, it was difficult to strike a balance between reliability and the freedom of the press. When the membership of the Committee increased, there would perhaps be more time to consider questions relating to press releases and summary records.

64. Mr. BENTALL (United Kingdom), supported by Ms. GORELY (Australia), said that the question was one of accurate reporting and not the freedom of the press. The States parties were not asking for censorship; they simply wanted to be quoted accurately. He pointed out that the Committee was more damaged from misreporting than States parties, which always had an opportunity to put the record straight.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.