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the Elimination
of all Forms of
Racial Discrimination**

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Sixty-fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1632nd MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Friday, 5 March 2004, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. YUTZIS

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 6) (continued)

Fourteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of Brazil (CERD/C/431/Add.8, HRI/CORE/1/Add.53/Rev.1, CERD/C/304/Add.111)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, the members of the delegation of Brazil took their places at the Committee table.
2. Ms. RIBEIRO (Brazil), introducing the fourteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of Brazil, submitted in one document, informed the Committee that the report had been prepared with the cooperation of organizations dedicated to combating ethnic and racial discrimination and other specialists. Various government bodies had been involved, including the State Secretariat for Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The report provided the Government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva with a useful guide for the implementation of its priority objectives, which were to encourage sustainable development, to generate employment and income, to combat poverty, to increase social integration and to promote democracy and human rights. In his inaugural speech, the President had recognized that overcoming racial inequality was a matter for the State to deal with. While it was true that racial discrimination was the legacy of four centuries of slavery, there had also been a lack of policies to combat it. The President had stated that the Brazilian Government could not remain neutral on racial issues; it should ensure equality of opportunity for all the country's citizens in their quest for better living conditions. Racism was therefore a common theme running through all current government policy, whether social, economic or political.
3. The Fome Zero (Zero Hunger) Programme had been launched at the beginning of the current Administration in order to tackle hunger and guarantee food security and adequate nutrition for the whole population. The Bolsa Família (income transfer) Programme, initiated in November 2003, targeted the poorest families, also with the aim of combating hunger and poverty. Most beneficiaries of those two programmes were black, since the black population made up over 64 per cent of the poor and at least 70 per cent of the destitute, as well as the majority of the unemployed or underemployed.
4. Three governmental bodies that were vital to the task of combating discrimination had been created: the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPIR), the Special Secretariat for Policies for Women (SPM) and the Special Secretariat for Human Rights (SEDH). They all had ministerial status and were responsible for coordinating policies with other government bodies, civil society and public and private institutions.
5. According to statistics on race in Brazil, 46.2 per cent of the population was black. It was widely acknowledged that structural racism existed and that racial and social inequality was rooted in the country's history. Black and indigenous populations had traditionally been deprived of access to goods and services and had been given little chance of exercising their rights as citizens. Measures had been taken in recent decades to improve racial discrimination in employment, to promote black labour and to strengthen public policies in favour of the black population.

6. Following the World Conference against Racism in Durban, a new cycle of policies had been adopted, based on the conclusions that slavery was a crime against humanity and that States must undertake to eliminate racism and encourage the political, economic and social development of the black population, particularly of black women. The official Brazilian document resulting from the conference recognized the historical responsibility for slavery and for the economic, social and political marginalization of African descendants. It also recommended that the Brazilian Criminal Code should consider racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance as aggravating circumstances. Affirmative action programmes had been set up under several ministries, which sought to ensure racial equality and the exercise of citizenship. The National Council for Combating Discrimination had been established under the auspices of the State Secretariat for Human Rights. In 2002, the second National Human Rights Plan had been launched, extending the scope of the first plan. The National Affirmative Action Programme was updated in 2002, introducing a series of specific measures to promote the participation of the black population, women and the disabled at federal level.

7. The legal framework of the periodic report was based on the 1988 Federal Constitution, which incorporated the international treaties and conventions that the State party had ratified. The Palmares Cultural Foundation, the first federal body responsible for racial issues, had also been created that year and its initially cultural approach had been broadened. Article 1, paragraph 4, of the Convention had been taken as the basis for several initiatives in the area of affirmative action.

8. Recent legislation included Act No. 10,678 establishing the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPIR) and the entry into force of International Labour Organization Convention No. 169. Brazil had presented a resolution to the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly on the incompatibility between democracy and racism. At a regional level, the State party had launched an initiative for the drafting of an Inter-American Convention to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

9. In June 2003, Brazil had promulgated a decree recognizing the Committee's powers under article 14 of the Convention and had established a body responsible for receiving complaints from persons who considered themselves victims of racial discrimination. That body had been authorized to allocate compensation to victims and to maintain a register of complaints, copies of which were sent each year to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

10. In relation to measures taken to combat terrorism, the State party had adopted the position that both States and international organizations had responsibility for ensuring that such measures were in accordance with international human rights instruments and did not result in discrimination on the grounds of race, colour or national or ethnic origin. In partnership with various social organizations, the Government had attempted to bolster the legal framework of policies designed to tackle discrimination and promote racial equality. Act No. 10,639 had introduced compulsory teaching of African history in public and private schools. Decrees had been passed setting up the National Policy for the Promotion of Racial Equality and the National Council for Policies on Racial Equality and regulating the human rights of rural black communities.

11. A new Civil Code had entered into force in January 2003, in line with the new Constitution, eliminating the discriminatory provisions on grounds of race, ethnicity or gender that had subsisted in the 1916 Civil Code. The rights and autonomy of indigenous groups had benefited directly thanks to the new Code and their legal status had been confirmed by specific legislation. In September 2003, the Supreme Court had made a landmark decision, considered to be of major legal, social and historical significance, in which it had asserted that the concept of racism, as it appeared in the Brazilian Constitution, was socio-political and not physical or biological. But despite those advances, discriminatory attitudes still persisted against some sectors of society such as the black population, indigenous people, migrants and gypsies. Two cases involving racial discrimination were currently under investigation.

12. With regard to institutional measures, a recent survey had shown that the most striking feature of Brazilian society was inequality and that poverty was most prevalent among black women. Those indicators reaffirmed the need for tougher policies in order to recover and preserve the dignity of a major part of the Brazilian population. A document entitled "Brasil sem Racismo" (Brazil without Racism) had been published by the Government in 2002, recognizing the existence of widespread, serious inequality and prejudice and suggesting the creation of a body to take responsibility for government policies on the promotion of racial equality. The SEPPIR was thus established with the task of promoting equality and protecting individuals and racial and ethnic groups, particularly the black population, from discrimination and other forms of intolerance. That task involved coordinating and formulating policies, encouraging cooperation between the public and private sectors and on a national and international level, and ensuring the implementation of all relevant conventions and agreements signed by Brazil. From 2004 onwards, the National Council for the Promotion of Racial Equality (CNPIR), a joint body including representatives of civil society, would monitor the legitimacy of all measures taken to promote equality.

13. The Multi-Year Plan for 2004-2007 envisaged significant changes in Brazilian society, including action to combat racial discrimination and to achieve social integration. Other measures included the implementation of a model for the coordination of policies to promote racial equality; support for quilombo (Afro-Brazilian) communities; affirmative action; sustainable development and social inclusion; strengthened international relations with Africa and South America; and the generation of data.

14. National policy on racial equality had provided the foundations for the work of many government agencies. An important tool in promoting ethnic diversity had been Decree No. 4799 of 4 August 2003. The black population had enjoyed a raised profile in Government communications material, while other indications of progress included a black judge on the bench of the Federal Supreme Court for the first time in Brazil's history, and the appointment of two black women to the National Council of Economic and Social Development and the Council of Food Safety and Nutrition.

15. Unfortunately, as a result of inadequate black representation in the National Congress and the failure of political parties to accord much importance to race issues, few matters of significance for the black population had been brought before Congress. However, since the mid-1990s some politicians had begun to consider the race question and, in 2003, the

Parliamentary Front for the Defence of Racial Equality, comprising 107 members of parliament, had been formed with the aim of proposing legislation that would promote the social inclusion of the black population and of supporting affirmative action policies in favour of vulnerable groups.

16. The Government's policy with regard to indigenous peoples and other minorities had been set out clearly in a document entitled "Agreements with Indigenous Peoples", yet despite the efforts that had been made in terms of legislation, conflicts still existed between indigenous peoples and certain sections of Brazilian society, particularly with regard to the demarcation of lands traditionally occupied by indigenous peoples and their right to exclusive use of those lands. It was hoped that the Indigenous Societies Bill No. 2057/91 would bring some improvement in the situation. On 12 February 2004, a permanent forum had been established for dialogue between the Government and indigenous organizations on the question of the recognition of territories.

17. The Arab and Jewish minorities were well integrated into Brazilian society and several associations were active in defending the identity and culture of the estimated 600,000 to 800,000 gypsies in Brazil. All groups that were racially discriminated against would receive the attention of the National Council for the Promotion of Racial Equality, which was to begin its work in March 2004 and which would draw up new terms of reference for policy on racial equality. Dialogue was maintained with black and other anti-discrimination movements, which had made significant contributions to policy development.

18. Although significant progress had been achieved between 1996 and 2002, the advances were still insufficient. The situation in Brazil should be viewed in the context of a large and complex country with massive regional variations and high levels of social exclusion and poverty; disparity in wealth distribution was among the worst in the world. A significant proportion of the Brazilian population did not have access to essential services. Eradicating poverty and its negative effects meant altering the conditions that kept people trapped in disadvantaged situations and impeded their access to economic, social and political resources. Such changes depended on promoting respect for human rights, including the right to development.

19. The Multi-Year Plan (PPA), which had been drawn up in consultation with civil society, would make it possible to mainstream gender and race issues across all areas of public policy. The Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPIR) had a key role to play in that regard. Ensuring that all men and women were involved in the transformation of society was one of the challenges that the Government faced. Continual dialogue between black movements and the various State bodies was crucial for the design of policy that could help in overcoming racial and ethnic inequalities.

20. In 2005, government bodies, black movements and associations dedicated to combating racial discrimination would participate in the first Conference on Policies to Promote Racial Equality. The Brazilian Government was determined to design and implement affirmative action policies that would ensure compliance with its obligations under international instruments. Brazil's next periodic report would contain improved indicators that demonstrated how effectively the Government had been in implementing its obligations under the Convention.

21. Brazil was undergoing a period of social change; the Government had taken up the challenge of equality and social justice and was building and strengthening its channels of dialogue with civil society. The Government intended to make sure that State policy would be reflected in the daily lives of the black population of Brazil, in a way that would set the period apart from others in the country's history.
22. Mr. THORNBERRY, Country Rapporteur, said that he agreed that the report provided a more faithful assessment of the situation in Brazil than previous reports had done (para. 465). The wealth of statistics in the report, particularly the breakdown of data according to race, was particularly helpful to the Committee. He noted with interest the increase in the number of people who self-identified as black, as well as the sizeable difference between the official and self-identification figures; in many cases, a smaller self-identification figure was due to a reluctance to identify with a group that had been subject to discrimination in the past. He wondered how the official figure had been arrived at and requested further information about the rationale for the change in statistical methodology that was being considered (para. 221).
23. He also wished to commend the Government on the level of detail provided about the social difficulties that were encountered by various racial groups. The statistics revealed disparities in key indicators of economic and social rights, and the gap between rich and poor in Brazil was large. A number of commendable initiatives had been undertaken with a view to remedying that situation, including the development of a database that would guide the implementation of affirmative action programmes. The open invitation that the Brazilian President had extended to all thematic rapporteurs to the Commission on Human Rights to visit Brazil at any time was a clear affirmation of the Government's commitment to human rights. Consultation with NGOs in the drafting of the report was encouraging (para. 556). He wished to know whether, under the Brazilian legal system, the Convention enjoyed a status that was equivalent to that of a constitutional norm.
24. Although racial discrimination in Brazil appeared to be related to differences of colour, in the case of Afro-Brazilians prejudice was in fact based on a presumption of slave origins and should therefore be considered also as a form of descent-based discrimination.
25. He advised against use of the term "just discrimination" (para. 316), which was misleading, and noted that, under the Convention, affirmative action was not considered to be discrimination. He asked how the Government reconciled affirmative action with the principle of formal equality, since the evidence seemed to suggest that the Government was in fact pursuing the more dynamic goal of substantive equality. He welcomed the statement in the speech reproduced in paragraph 303 of the report to the effect that it was not enough not to discriminate; it was necessary at the same time to create opportunities, which was in line with the principles of the Convention. He noted with satisfaction the distinction drawn between generic libel and race or colour-based libel (para. 59). He asked for updated information on the progress of the Civil Actions Bill referred to in paragraph 61.
26. Greater elaboration was needed on measures taken to implement article 3; in that regard, he referred the delegation to General Recommendation XIX on the prevention, prohibition and eradication of racial segregation and apartheid. The measures taken to implement article 4 were wide-ranging: he wished to know the legal definition of organizations having racist objectives or neo-Nazi groups (para. 75), and how that definition had been arrived at. Given the number of

references in the report to neo-Nazi organizations, he wondered whether the existing provisions which appeared to have been designed for the prohibition of formally established organizations, were able to deal with a more informal network. He would appreciate further information about the lacuna in the legislation regarding Internet-based dissemination of racist material.

27. According to paragraph 105 of the report, unregistered and illiterate persons were prohibited from standing as candidates for elected office. He wished to know how many people were disadvantaged by that policy in terms of their political participation. Such a policy could have a disparate impact on different racial and ethnic groups in Brazil. Further information should be provided on how literacy was assessed and whether importance was placed on literacy in Portuguese only, or whether indigenous and other minority languages were taken into account.

28. Regarding draft bill No. 1813/91 (para. 117), the delegation should clarify who would be protected by the new law. The existence of slave labour was a serious human rights issue, and the new law could have a racial dimension. He wondered whether the references to education made in the report were exclusively to education in Portuguese, or whether they also included education in minority and indigenous languages. Brazil had made commendable efforts to prohibit racial discrimination in regard to access to public places. The delegation had provided a large number of economic and social indicators, although it was disappointing to see that there was still a wide economic and social gap between the black and white populations in Brazil. The Afro-Brazilian population was underrepresented in higher education on account of the fact that many students were forced to abandon their studies due to financial problems.

29. According to paragraph 172 of the report, Brazilian jurisprudence was inconsistent on the issue of racial discrimination. The section of the report devoted to discriminatory practices mentioned many cases of racial discrimination that had been filed and investigated, but little information had been provided on completed cases. The civil and military police, who were responsible for law enforcement, killed three times more non-whites than whites. Measures should be taken to reduce racial discrimination in the legal system. Regarding forms of cultural expression (para. 179), he wished to know how the Government defined the “cultural rights of all”. He asked whether the anti-discrimination policies described in paragraph 181 were standard federal policies, or whether the individual states were responsible for their implementation. The special training courses that had been established for civil servants and military personnel should be commended.

30. According to the report, São Paulo was the only state to have programmes for identifying and developing quilombo communities. He requested information on measures taken to protect such communities in other states. He noted with satisfaction that Brazil recognized the term “indigenous peoples” in international forums. The Government had set many positive and ambitious goals within its national human rights programme. According to paragraph 191 of the report, indigenous people could be removed from their lands in the interest of national sovereignty. The delegation should provide further information on such cases, particularly in view of the strict provisions on removal set out in ILO Convention No. 169. The deletion from the Civil Code of the discriminatory restriction on the exercise of civil capacity by indigenous peoples was a positive step. He wished to know whether the restriction had simply been removed from the Code, or whether the provisions on indigenous rights had been redrafted.

31. Slow progress had been made regarding the demarcation of indigenous lands, which was a key issue for the survival of indigenous peoples. According to paragraph 208 of the report, moreover, legal challenges had been mounted after demarcation had taken place. Further information was therefore required on the entrenchment of rights for the legal security of indigenous people. The Committee wished to be kept informed of any progress in discussions regarding draft legislation currently before Congress. The establishment of a permanent forum for dialogue on land tenure was to be commended, as it gave minority groups the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes that affected their daily lives. Mining legislation had been before Congress since 1995, but had still not been passed. The Committee was also concerned that Act No. 4412, which regulated the presence of armed forces on indigenous lands, failed to provide the necessary protection for indigenous people.

32. Regarding differentiated schooling for indigenous peoples (para. 212), reference was made only to measures that had been taken in the state of São Paulo. He would be interested to know whether the measures affected only the indigenous communities, or whether they were applicable to people of indigenous descent in general. He requested further information on gypsy communities, in particular how births were registered and whether gypsy children had easy access to schooling.

33. The debate on racial discrimination had begun relatively recently in Brazil, but it had advanced quickly and new methods of addressing racial issues had been introduced. The Committee commended the action taken by the Government to give priority to race and ethnic issues and to combat poverty.

34. Mr. de GOUTTES said that Brazil's role at the Durban conference and its new programmes and affirmative action on racial discrimination were to be commended. The relatively recent awareness of discrimination against the black community was a positive step, and he noted with interest that the number of people who considered themselves to be part of the black community had increased over recent years. The report contained precise tables of statistics on the impact of discrimination on the black community, access to water, quality of housing, literacy, infant mortality, education, and employment. Over recent years, many positive measures to combat racial and ethnic discrimination had been taken, both at the regional and national levels, including, inter alia, the establishment of the National Council for Combating Discrimination and the development of the National Affirmative Action Programme and projects for the integration of indigenous peoples. He noted with satisfaction that Brazil had ratified ILO Convention No. 169.

35. The Constitution contained provisions on the recognition of the rights of quilombo communities, who had the right to the definitive ownership of the land on which they lived. It also contained provisions on the recognition of social, cultural, religious and linguistic organizations of indigenous and Indian peoples, and on their right to the land they occupied, which was imprescriptible. He requested further information on the results of the application of such provisions.

36. The Public Prosecutor's Office played a particularly important role in defending the rights of Indians and the delegation should give more information on the measures that were being taken in that regard. The Committee had been informed of an increase in violence in

Brazil, and instances of the police threatening and killing indigenous people who were defending their land rights. The delegation should provide further information on the practical implementation of specific constitutional provisions concerning violations of the rights of indigenous peoples, including the types of violations and the sentences handed down in such cases. The Committee had been informed that a large proportion of those who were tried and imprisoned in Brazil were members of the black population. He requested further information on the measures taken to combat neo-Nazi propaganda and racist web sites.

37. Mr. AVTONOMOV said that the detailed account of federal, state and municipal legislation laid out in the report should be commended. There were, however, contradictions in the statistics provided on the ethnic composition of the country. The delegation should clarify those statistics and indicate whether they included people of mixed race. The latter often suffered discrimination because they had their own cultural specificities. Although measures were being introduced to grant land rights to quilombo communities, it was a slow process. He wished to know why such measures had not been speeded up, particularly in view of the fact that some of the land concerned had been found to be rich in natural resources. Disputes had arisen regarding the ownership of such land, but due to a lack of financial resources, many members of the quilombo communities could not secure the necessary legal protection to defend their rights.

38. Measures taken to preserve indigenous customs by providing differentiated schooling to indigenous peoples (para. 212) were commendable. However, since significant numbers of the indigenous population lived in remote areas and were unaware of how their rights were determined or how to defend them, especially their right to land, such schooling should also educate them about modern Brazilian society. Given that numerous cases of violence against indigenous peoples had been reported, he wished to know how effective the mechanisms established to protect indigenous peoples had been. He enquired whether there were any plans to improve those mechanisms and, if so, precisely how that would be accomplished. He wondered to what extent differentiated schooling helped to preserve indigenous customs. Given the increase in the indigenous population over the years, it was important to develop, not merely to preserve, indigenous cultures.

39. Mr. VALENCIA RODRÍGUEZ said that a number of measures had been taken recently by the current Administration to combat deeply rooted manifestations of discrimination and racial prejudice. Those measures included the revision of textbooks and the establishment of a wide variety of mechanisms, such as the Interministerial Group for the Promotion of the Black Population (para. 384), the National Council for Combating Discrimination (para. 15), the National Affirmative Action Programme (para. 17), the new National Human Rights Programme (para. 19) and the affirmative action programmes set up within the State Secretariat for Human Rights, the Ministries of Justice and Agricultural Development and the Rio Branco Institute. Those had all been incorporated into the Constitution of 1988, which was the cornerstone of Brazil's democratic transition and its institutionalization of human rights.

40. Despite such efforts, the situation of the black and mestizo populations, in terms of access to basic social services such as employment, housing, education, health and social security, was deplorable. The situation of black and mestizo women was even worse, since such

women tended to suffer double discrimination. They frequently received lower wages than men for the same work and, owing to their lack of skills and education, were generally limited to performing domestic work or other unskilled labour. He requested that the Committee should be kept abreast of progress made in applying the various measures taken to improve the situation of blacks in Brazil (para. 297).

41. Steps had also been taken to benefit the indigenous peoples of Brazil (para. 299) in such areas as indigenous land demarcation, health services, education and agriculture. Some of the measures benefited indigenous and black groups together. Given the fact that those populations were widely dispersed throughout the vast territory of Brazil, the coordination of those efforts was very important and the Committee should be kept informed of progress in that area.

42. In its previous concluding observations, the Committee had drawn the Government's attention to the serious consequences of poverty, which affected a considerable proportion of the population, especially the black, indigenous and mestizo populations. Combating poverty had become one of the main priorities of the current Administration, which had introduced numerous initiatives that involved both public and private institutions. The next periodic report should indicate the results that had been achieved in that regard.

43. The reforms undertaken recently included Act No. 7716/89, which prescribed that the practice of racism was a "non-bailable and imprescriptible crime, subject to a prison term, under the terms of the law". Many of the measures adopted by the state legislatures adhered to that constitutional provision. The information provided by the Government on the most important legal cases or police reports was very useful and it was hoped that the next periodic report would include more such data.

44. Mr. AMIR said that Brazil was a country that dealt with problems openly, which was a sign that it was maturing politically. The issue of preserving the culture of the indigenous peoples in the Amazon region was an area of particular concern to the Committee. He enquired whether, at the federal level, there existed any records of the literature, poetry or history of the indigenous peoples who had been Brazil's first inhabitants. Such records were a part of the nation's cultural heritage and an important element in its overall identity. He wondered whether the indigenous peoples of the Amazon region had become landowners as a result of treaties with their colonizers or whether they had always been owners of their lands.

45. He requested information concerning the manner in which the indigenous communities took part in elections. During the latest presidential elections, the issue of poverty had been a decisive factor in bringing about a change of government. He wondered whether, at the regional level, indigenous peoples were able to participate in sufficient numbers so as to elect the politicians who best responded to their needs. Increasing the political representation of indigenous peoples was an important means of resolving economic inequalities. He asked whether indigenous peoples in the State of Amazonas had access to courts where they could file a complaint if they had suffered some form of discrimination. The socio-economic disparity between urbanized and rural states was a matter that should be corrected through sustainable development and adequate political representation.

46. Mr. TANG Chengyuan said that Brazil had introduced many practical measures in favour of its indigenous population, but that a number of problems still remained. Persons of indigenous origin had been subjected to persecution, violence and the confiscation of their land. The rights of the indigenous communities should be protected, but they should not be separate from those of other Brazilian citizens. The indigenous communities and the other citizens of Brazil should take steps to strengthen their communication with each other.

47. The fact that foreigners from non-Portuguese-speaking countries had to reside in Brazil for more than 15 years consecutively in order to obtain Brazilian nationality (para. 120) had an impact on family stability, since it could happen that parents had alien status while their children were already Brazilian citizens. Some 69 per cent of the population of Brazil was considered poor, which was an enormous percentage. The Government should take measures to improve their standard of living and to integrate them into the mainstream of Brazilian society.

48. Mr. CALITZAY said that he had noted with satisfaction that article 6, III, of the Brazilian Civil Code, which restricted the legal capacity of indigenous peoples, had been found to be unconstitutional. However, it was still worrying that their capacity in that regard still remained to be defined and regulated, as described in paragraph 197 of the seventeenth periodic report. The statistics relating to violence against indigenous peoples were alarming. He asked what measures had been taken to deal with the problem and whether perpetrators received proper punishment.

49. Paragraph 212 of the periodic report referred to the fact that specific measures had been taken to guarantee indigenous peoples differentiated schooling in order to preserve their customs. It would be more appropriate if that objective was to preserve their culture, which was a much broader concept. It was encouraging that the Government had recognized the term “indigenous peoples” as the appropriate designation of the indigenous populations in international forums (para. 299). He enquired whether that term had also been approved at the national level, since the periodic report also employed the term “Indian” as synonymous with “indigenous”.

50. He requested additional information on the improvement of agricultural activities of low environmental impact (para. 299). He enquired about the Government’s position with respect to genetically modified seeds. He wished to know whether the culture of indigenous peoples was being taken into account in the formulation of educational curricula for indigenous children. It was commendable that the Government and the National Congress had taken measures to protect indigenous knowledge, traditional ideas and genetic heritage, including the protection of biodiversity (para. 300).

51. Ms. JANUARY-BARDILL said that the seventeenth periodic report was an excellent reflection of the vibrancy of Brazilian culture. It was an honest portrayal of the progress that had been made and the challenges that lay ahead for the Government as it embarked on a broad transformation of race relations in Brazil. Both in linking racism to poverty and in tackling the issue of inequality, the report had been forthright and refreshing. More States parties should follow that example. It was encouraging to note that Brazil had acknowledged the importance of the World Conference against Racism. The report had also pointed to the link between racism and politics, which demonstrated great insight.

52. She had taken part in a comparative study of racism in three countries: South Africa, Brazil and the United States of America. The outcome of that study was interesting in that, despite the fact that the countries had differing political systems, the relationship between poverty and race was the same in all three.

53. She requested further details concerning the application of Act No. 7716, which defined offences arising from prejudice based on race or colour. She asked whether the State party planned to enact specific legislation in order to deal with the issue of racism on the Internet. That was not an explicit requirement of the Convention, but much attention had focused on it at the World Conference against Racism.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.